



# TRAMP-ROYAL ON THE TOBY

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

# The Travels of Tramp-Royal

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# TRAMP-ROYAL ON THE TOBY.

BEING THE TRUE HISTORY OF HIS EARLIER  
ADVENTURES ON THE ROAD IN WALES AND  
ENGLAND AND HIS LATER WANDERINGS IN  
GALLOWAY, OF HIS JOYS AND SORROWS AS  
A ROGUE AND VAGABOND, OF THE COMPANY  
HE KEPT AND THE POLICEMEN HE AVOIDED,  
OF HIS DESCENT THROUGH DOSSHOUSE AND  
CASUAL WARD TO THE THAMES EMBANKMENT,  
AND OF HIS ARRESTS AND IMPRISONMENTS,  
TOGETHER WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE WHOLE  
ENTIRE WORLD OF THE TOBY WRITTEN BY

MATT MARSHALL

who wrote 'The Travels of Tramp-Royal'

"The untented Kosmos my abode,  
I pass, a wilful stranger  
My mistress still the open road  
And the bright eyes of danger"  
—R. L. S.

EDINBURGH AND LONDON  
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1933





To  
JUSTICE'S ANTONYM  
*in fear and derision, in hate and contempt,*  
*this book is most disrespectfully*  
*and rebelliously*  
*dedicated*



## THE TRAMP

SLACK slouch, flat feet—  
An easy pace and tireless ,  
Swinging on for ever  
Where the long roads run ,  
Lean-thighed, hard-thewed—  
Without a bed and fireless ,  
Tanned and weather-tawny  
As the heather by the sun

Ditch bed, frost quilt—  
And all the stars on high for him ,  
Snoring in the thicket  
Where the damp draughts chill ,  
Friend-shy, heart-whole—  
No need for one to sigh for him ,  
Wedded to the highway,  
Keeping house upon the hill

Left ! Right ! Left ! Right !—  
No moss will ever cling to him ,  
Plodding round the planet,  
One of Cain's scarred kind ,  
Highroads, byroads—  
The years will only bring to him  
A tale of weary travel  
To an end he'll never find

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# IN WALES AND ENGLAND

## LAP THE FIRST

### TOWARDS WALES THE MALVERNS TO ROSS AND WHITCHURCH

On Worcestershire Beacon—Wild Wales!—The Hasher—Every-tramp—Sons of the Toby—The Mark of Cain—Night voices—Ross-on-Wye—The mantle of St Martin—"Get out!"—Having my goose cooked—A couch incomparable

ONE evening in summer I found myself standing on Worcestershire Beacon wondering where on the map I could go to next

The Beacon, the highest point of the Malvern Hills, commands one of the finest panoramic views to be seen anywhere To the far horizon, eastward, northward, and southward, stretch the broad and storied acres of half the shires of Merrie England Cloud-capped towers, gorgeous palaces, solemn temples, you overlook them all It is a prospect in a million Sylvan, pastoral, bountiful, flowing with milk and honey, the limitless champaign smiles under its happy skies, challenging the wanderer

At all events it challenged me

From London, away back, I had beat my mendicant way through Berkshire, Wiltshire, Somerset, North Devon, and Cornwall, to as far west and south as the sea would let me, to Land's End Then back again, holding easting down, I had padded the hoof along the sunny Channel coast through South Devon, Dorset, and Hampshire, to Southampton town Then, road-hungry as ever, up

north I had struck through Wiltshire and Somerset again, right on and up and round through Gloucestershire and Worcestershire, to the place I was at now And, as I say, I wondered where on the map I could go to next

But if the prospect eastward from the Beacon challenged me to stay, that to the westward challenged me onward For while far below bloomed the pleasant orchardland of Hereford with its wooded knolls, moated granges, classic streams, far beyond rose the stormy hills of Wales, crest piling above crest in the sunset sky, with the Black Mountains of Brecknock glooming terrifically under mist and the lone summit of Pen-y-gader blackly defined against the forges of the west

Wild Wales! What a country to tramp through! What a paradise to wander in! Yes, but my pockets were empty, my feet were almost bootless, not to say travel-weary, and the thought of all that I must endure once I ventured within rough roads, hungry roads, rainy roads, wild beds, bush beds, freezing beds, and the horrible and inevitable discomfort of the flesh inseparable from tramp life, all this made me pause long and ponder deeply before stepping westward

But in the end the spirit prevailed over the puling flesh, and in the green-and-gold dusk of the twilight I began the steep descent of the divide in a south-westerly slant and shortly came out on the road that winds down through the Welsh Marches of Herefordshire and Monmouthshire to Wales itself

It was growing late, though, and the burden of my mileage for that day pressed heavily upon me, making my feet drag So, when a snug-looking haystack loomed up presently by the wayside, I made short work of wriggling out for myself a draught-proof burrow in its lee foot

And no sooner was I built cosily into the wall of the stack than I heard the rhythmic plod of a walker toiling up the road towards me. Immediately I was up on an elbow playing Peeping Tom. It might be a flunkey from yonder manor coming with his lord's compliments to place at my disposal the four-poster in the red room where spooks did nightwork. Or it might be the farmer coming to wallop the puff out of me.

Luckily it was neither of these. It was, of all persons in the world I expected to see then, nobody but the Hasher himself! I could hardly credit my eyes. But his nubs it undoubtedly was, walking as usual on his knees, the same odd half-of-a-man whom I had last clapped eyes on years ago in a mumpers' howff on the Scottish coast near St Abbs. Yes, in Auld Janet's Rest for Weary Travellers it was that I had last seen the Hasher, sitting on a settle between a Leeds clockmender and a tinker harridan eating his supper of syboes and cow-heel. And lo! here he was in the Welsh Marches plodding along as usual on his knees.

For the Hasher is legless. A quarry explosion necessitated both his legs being amputated above the knee. That is why he is called the Hasher. When you meet him stumping along on the great leathern pads that serve him as boots you get the impression that he is hashing, or hurrying, at a great rate. But the Hasher only appears to be hashing. His disablement makes walking possible only at the expense of a monstrous amount of muscular energy. Although both arms and thighs work as though he were doing a mile a minute, yet his pace is such that a snail could make rings round him. If anybody can be said to make haste slowly, that body is the Hasher.

I was about to hail him, but changed my mind.

Ten to one he would want to pal up with me on the morrow, and as I knew it would break my heart to have to suit my pace to his, I sang dumb I lay eyeing him from my coign of vantage and let him stump his way past unchallenged Then, still wondering how many years it had taken him to win this far, and conjecturing how many yards he could travel in a fortnight, I composed myself for sleep, listening to the night wind and cursing softly at the tickling hay mites

Me? I am Everytramp Consider me how I grow Except when the workhouse gets me, I toil not, neither do I spin, and yet I say unto you that Solomon, stripped of all his glory, was just the same as one of me

And you know me well When you pass me on the road a strange curiosity prompts you to turn round and look back at me For, say what you will, I am a fascinating creature I compel your scrutiny And in spite of my clobber—or maybe because of it—my weather-bitten entity draws all your glances As the needle to the magnet, so you to me

But, being somewhat afraid and wholly unsure of me, it is seldom, if ever, you accost me I might tap you for something For at the same time as I attract I also repel In fact I attract *because* I repel And so you find yourself looking back up the road at me, and wondering whither?—whence?—why?

Is it my daisies that draw your gaze? Or my sun-green cadie? Or my peter? Or my drum? Or is it my gait you admire, with the rhythm in it? Or is it me, just me, and all I stand for, that appeals so strangely to your fancy?

You really can't say Anyway, you'd give a

deuce of a lot to fare over the hill with me—now, wouldn't you ? Isn't there down and away below, in the very nethermost crypt of your being, an invisible cord that has momentarily made Siamese Twins of us ? Of course there is ! Only, as I say, you are somewhat afraid and wholly unsure of me You don't know what kind of pal I might make And then you've your job, you know, and also, and besides, and moreover—and so you continue to excuse yourself until a bend in the road takes you out of the picture

But for me and my like the road beckons and beckons And on I go, fusionless as a docken, forever blessing and abusing this mother of mine Mother ? you ask Yea, mother, indeed The road is our mother most benign, and we are her sons who travel thereon Sons of the Toby

And royally well does she, our mother, cater for us We find everything on the road Every want, every need, every desire, we find it on the road We have only to tramp, and keep on tramping, and we positively *know* that, sooner or later, whatsoever we desire, be it what it will, we'll find it on the road It may be this, it may be that It may be tommy, it may be clobber, it may be only the makings of a fag—it matters not what it is—we *know* we'll find it on the road Aye, and this we also know that if we walk long enough and far enough, God help us, we'll find an open coffin on the road

To you I may appear a lonely figure But emphatically I assure you that I am not at all lonely, except, perhaps, when my route obliges me to run the gauntlet of a city's streets, or in the twilight at a day's end

For on the crowded pavements, in the midst of the hurriers, my own un-hurry makes me feel like a rock among rapids, *then* I feel as conspicuously

lonely as a genius among men And similarly in the gathering twilight of some strange countryside, when man and beast and bird and stream and tree are all quietened down for the dark hours, again do I feel loneliness flood in upon me on a drowning tide, *then* I feel the Mark of Cain branding my forehead But only until night comes For I am one with the dark, with the prowlers of the wild, with the grey-beard cloud-wrack scudding across the moon

With twilight gone and the moon swinging up behind the ruffians I come back and into my own again Then, stumbling and crackling my way through wait-a-bit bushes, I gather my deadwood Then, in the midst of a clearing, I light my fire Then, taking my drum from my peter I dip it in a pool where the stars are swaying, and set it on the blaze Then, I drum-up

I am happy now I am at home I cuddle my knees to my chin and laugh like a looney into the fire Kings may be blessed but I am glorious I crow with delight, with sheer animal delight And I sip my brew and munch my tommy while the cones go pop in the fire's red heart

I am lonely no more, but sit at meat with a glut of company Orion yonder, balancing on a leg, and the Twins, and the familiar Bear, and the moon dimming their splendour—is not this company enough for a silly poor man?

There's the traffic of the wild, too the incessant thoroughfaring of relentless assassins, the pistol-like cracking of trodden dead stuff, the mad death-and-life scurrying through forest runways, the scream of the hunted—then silence

Moreover there is always the road, whose proximity itself is company enough It has night voices as well as day voices The night wind sighing among the wires overhead attains at times to croon-

ing melody And the reckless 'all out' home-rushing of belated motor-cars, with momentary blaze of blinding light, the far-away throbbing of motor-cycles, the hurried heel-and-toe tapping of pedestrians walking along the exact middle of the road, singing songs to keep fear off, the ghostly drifting past of unbodied voices which the experienced listener knows to belong to cyclists, all these are the Toby's night voices, and they lull us, the Sons of the Toby, to most happy slumber

Or else it may be that the spike has got me—the comfortable, companionable, considerate spike I ring a big brass bell by a little green door, and the tramp-major opens and ushers me in I am booked, searched, and bathed beyond recognition In an irritating hair-shirt I am loosed on the dormitory with blankets, rooti, and skilly-go-lee And I meet my chinas There's the Talking Fish with his kip beside the radiator—knowing dog! And Drunken Tom And Truthy Cocksedge And Curley the Darkey Yes, but the Queer Fella's missing, is it Dartmoor this time? And the Scotties are in the majority, as usual For it is ever thus, the Jocks predominate and lead the cross-talk tramps-royal all!

So you see I am seldom lonely And all I ask is a clean hearth, like this, and the rigour of the game

Next morning broke ideal The sun shone bright, a gentle breeze breathed fitfully down the valley, and I was up and away along the solitary road ere the dew had dried upon the meadow grass

The cottage chimneys were only beginning to send up their tall spirals of breakfast woodsmoke when I strode ravenously into the village of Ledbury and started a door-to-door canvass for provender But, though the people were in, my luck was out,



and all the alms I received was the torn-off top of a loaf and a dry rind of cheese. Still, these tasted just as good as bacon and eggs, while the liquid crystal I sucked up from a brooklet further on made coffee seem like mud in comparison.

The road between Ledbury and the celebrated tourist centre of Ross-on-Wye proved monotonous in the extreme, and I was immeasurably bucked when in the late afternoon I arrived in the latter pleasantly situated town in time to make hay while the tea-hour fires burned.

Thereafter, full-stomached and care-free, having knocked at back doors with gratifying success, I stalked about the place examining the picturesque old Market Hall and admiring the exquisite views to be seen—in the windows of the picture postcard sellers. For the Valley of the Wye being a world-famous beauty spot, pictorial reminders of the fact hit the eye of the beholder at every turn.

I didn't loiter long in Ross, though. Tramp-like, once I had sampled the flesh-pots I was as anxious to quit as I had been to arrive. So I lost no time in hitting the road, which hereabouts parallels the Wye preparatory to rising into the heart of the green hills around Symond's Yat.

Before reaching the rise, however, I found lying on the crown of the road what appeared to be a cloak of some kind.

"Good!" says I, "St Martin obviously has passed this way, and seeing me coming along has left behind half his mantle." Then as I picked it up and saw its real nature, I added, "And he must have known it is Wales I'm making for. It's not merely a cloak, it's a waterproof!" And, wisely taking the hint, I appropriated that waterproof, which would make a good ground-sheet, and continued my way rejoicing.

What with admiring the scenery and lying on green banks smoking and resting, it was actually twilight when I came to the little village of Whitchurch that nestles at the foot of those hills I mentioned. Whereupon, deciding to sleep there that night and postpone the climb till morning, I left the road and made a bee-line for a haystack that stood in the shelter of some tall trees near the river.

But the beggar-loving St Martin must have been guiding my weary feet, for hardly had I begun to dig myself out the usual nest in the foot of the stack when my roving eye fell on something infinitely better in the dormitory line.

This was nothing more nor less than a derelict motor omnibus standing silent and still at the back of the stack.

The engine was gone, 'tis true, as were most of the fittings, but the overhead cover was intact, the two inside seats still retained their cushions, and, by the hundred holy hip-baths of Halicarnassus, the thing was tenantless!

But although I took instant possession I didn't feel too easy. There was a disquieting tidiness about the place. Also, under one of the seats I found some dog biscuits and wire snares. I didn't like that. So, instead of undressing and going to sleep, I lay down in my clothes with only my boots off—waiting.

Nor had I long to wait. Suddenly I heard footsteps outside, and before I could move I was confronted by a couple of greyhounds and a wild old poacher-looking man.

“Get out!” the old bloke rapped. “Get right out of here!”

“But there's room for both of us, chum,” I replied, amused at his utter lack of human charity. “Besides, I was here first. Make yourself at home.”

"Home!" he howls "*This* is my home! This 'bus belongs to me, and you're getting out of it!"

"I don't believe it belongs to you," says I, "and I'm not getting out I'm staying here till morning"

"Are you!" he cries, brandishing his cudgel "We'll soon see about that Wait!" And away he goes for reinforcements

At that I got up ruefully from my cushions and began drawing on my boots I felt I should have to get out For although I knew it wouldn't be a policeman the poacher would return with—a man doesn't evoke the aid of John Law with a couple of poached pussies in his tail—still I sensed that whoever it was he had gone to fetch would prove capable of cooking my goose for me

I was right, too I had finished tying my boots and was sitting munching some of the dog biscuits when the sound of voices and approaching footsteps broke the night's stillness, and into the 'bus climbed the old poacher and another man whose annoyed face spoke eloquently of rudely interrupted sleep

"Look here," the latter begins, coming instantly to the point, "this 'bus belongs to me, and if you don't get out in double quick time, by heaven, we'll jolly well carry you out!"

"Oh, be easy," says I, getting up, for the man certainly looked capable of owning a 'bus, "I've decided not to sleep here There's too much loquacity in the air Besides," turning to the poacher, "I'm very particular whom I sleep beside"

"You cheeky young hound!" he cries, using a word less legitimate than 'hound,' and instead of 'cheeky' employing an adjective that once upon a time shocked delighted audiences I mean the Shavian adjective

"You cheeky *old* hound!" cries I, doing likewise, believing to be sauce for the goose what was salad

dressing for the gosling                      And so they carried  
me out unanimously

But for another hour thereafter, until midnight, I reclined on the grassy verge of the road, smoking the longest cigarettes I could manufacture Which was for devilment For the two Good Samaritans stood by all the time, fuming, and waiting until the homeless tramp should take himself off before they departed each to his cosy bed

However, to make a short story longer, my tobacco finally gave out, and, with the cold-betokening sneezes of the terrible twins making music in my ears, I rose from the grass and hit the high road for the hills

Up and away from these boorish dwellers of the plains I climbed, up and up until I fancied I should have to crawl on all fours to avoid colliding with the stars, up and up until the lights of the village twinkled far away down like the lanterns of Lilliput, up and up until I imagined a hop, skip, and jump was all that separated me from the Great White Highway of the heavens, up and up until the earth itself dwindled to but soil on my boot-soles and I bulked and jutted like a colossus into the vast of space

When I had climbed as high as I could I lay down on my back on the hilltops and gazed, daring and fearfully, into the midnight sky It was hair-raising It made me feel like the last lone human at the Crack o' Doom waiting demented for the moving of the Will And feeling thus I fell asleep on my couch incomparable

Hills for a pillow, stars for bedmates, *I* should envy a poacher kipping in a 'bus !

## LAP THE SECOND

### INTO SOUTH WALES MONMOUTH TO CAERLEON AND CARDIFF

Monmouth—A mouthful of leg—Caerleon-upon-Usk—The  
Ancient Mariner—Newport, Mon—On Wentloog Level—  
A Somerset memory—The domain of E\moor—A narrow  
escape—Rain—In Cardiff—Something more grand

NIGHT passed and another day dawned, calm and beautiful Viewed from my lofty eyrie among the green hills of the Wye the sunrise was a sight to fare far for It made me forget for an hour that I was only a penniless tramp with my breakfast still to beg

My road that morning, after I descended from the heights, led down through rather a tame sort of countryside to the historic town of Monmouth Here I breakfasted on kind hearts and keen cheese, laid in rations for the road, and loitered a while on the Monnow Bridge to contemplate the tourists contemplating the old fortified gateway which, their guide-books informed them, makes the bridge an object of especial interest Then I took the road and was lucky to get a lift in a motor-car into the sleepy little village of Usk that stands on the pleasant river of that name

But as Usk had nothing to offer me in the eleemosynary way I shook its insufferable dust from off my daisies and mooned sulkily along the highway the rest of that obnoxious afternoon until twilight turned low the daylight and showed me to an exasperating

bed in a stack-foot where beasts had been And there I lay down for an all-night curse at things

Next morning I quit the stack betimes, and have not limped far along the main drag when a beggable-looking farmhouse swims into my ken So up I go and mooch around the farm buildings, looking, if a suspicious yokel had asked me, for the farmer But, as the hens all seem to have laid their quota of eggs behind lock and key, I acknowledge defeat, register chagrin, and sidle up the path to the back door

I'm just in the act of putting foot on the stoop, though, when out from its kennel springs a slavering watchdog and freezes like winky on to my ankle I let out a yell, clout the brute over the head good and hard, and heave it off with a kick Whereupon the farmer appears, and, when he has had a dekko at the mess his dog has made of my leg, I'll be flummoxed if the clodpole doesn't laugh

At that I curse him and his hound till he becomes apoplectic and the laugh is on the other side of his face, so he has me run off the farm, bleeding leg and all, by a couple of hefty farmhands in mucky boots

When I came to examine the ankle I found that the dog had sunk his fangs in the same spot where I had been bitten not long previously, down Cornwall way, and one minute longer until its teeth had met and the brute would have had a mouthful of leg

You will scarcely believe it, but I assure you that this training of dogs by human beings to attack and drag down at sight other human beings is an enormity commonly practised and invariably to be met with wherever roads run and tramps travel On the other hand, I am not aware of any one case on record where a dog has been known to train a human being to attack other dogs at sight Even in

the most mongrel of canine circles, I am informed, that sort of thing just simply isn't done

After examining my bleeding ankle and having nothing in my pockets in the first-aid line, I burned the breeze as fast as my leg would let me and at last came into the little town that has a poem three words long for a name Caerleon-upon-Usk

But alas ! my frame of mind was such that for the time being I didn't care a footer for how romantic the name sounded or how full of fabulous and historic ghosts the place was What the deuce had a dog-bitten, flea-bitten tramp to do with Arthurian knight-errantry or the legions of Old Rome ?

So instead of dreaming myself into a violent state of coma I limp along through Caerleon-upon-Usk on the look-out for a house with iodine in it And I soon find it a little brown house, an old brown house, under an apple tree, with its owner leaning on the little green gate obviously yearning to insinuate yarns into somebody

Yarns is the word ! In the batting of an eye I have him sized up and knocked down as an Ancient Mariner Here's my meat, thinks I, and go forward to the feast

"Mate," I say, "I'm an A B out of a berth I signed off in Liverpool but got canned up, and some blushing dagoes half-inched my dough and snaffled my sea-book At present I'm steering a course for Cardiff in the hopes of skinning out in some kind man's hooker I——"

"Your leg's bleeding, do you know ? "

"Yes A dog bent himself on to it a mile back when I was sounding a farmer for a job "

"It looks bad, mate," returns the Ancient Mariner

"Will you let me see what I can do ? Come in "

Thereupon he ushered me into his little brown house, where, he said, he had lived alone and done

for himself ever since swallowing the anchor. Everything was coiled up and flemished down, shipshape and Bristol fashion. Space-saving gadgets of most ingenious construction testified as to his former sphere in life. He had a first-aid kit, too, and soon fixed my ankle for me. Then he produced the land-lubber's equivalent of ship's biscuit and salt horse, and got a lot of unnecessary yarns off his chest while I wired into the pemmican.

For a couple of hours he entertained me, then I tore myself away, and, with his good wishes still ringing in my ears and the nip of his iodine still lingering in my ankle, and hitting the Newport road, I left the City of the Legions—really a non-descript townlet—in far better case than when I entered it. I had received succour under false pretences, true enough, but that was part of the game. No harm, but good, had resulted. I had merely followed the sound advice that the minister of Essendean once gave to David Balfour when he said, “Be soople, Davie, in things immaterial.”

Putting my best foot forward for Newport I wasn't long in getting there. About three or four miles is all that separates these two places which are so far apart in every other respect. Because Newport, shrieking of to-day, is the antithesis of Caerleon, that whispers of yesterday. It is just a big coaly and irony town, with docks attached. And so, except that I spent a couple of hours devouring multifarious literature in its free library, and a couple of minutes devouring the little its harassed housewives could afford me in its free park, I can only say that I stayed in Newport, Mon, just long enough to find my way out.

On the grimy banks of the Ebbw river outside the town I hazarded a wash and shave. But as my safety razor blade was now about five months



blunt, and as I possessed neither soap nor brush and had only cold dirty river water for the barber business, you can imagine what torture I underwent trying to shave off the stiff stubble of chin fungus reflected in my square inch of fly-blown looking-glass

Afterwards, feeling a new man, I climbed on to the road, and, like the prince in the fairy tale, continued my route. But, also like the prince, I soon came to cross-roads and had to decide which to follow. Both went to Cardiff, some twelve miles away, one, the main road, striking across country, and the other, a country lane, meandering along the Severn. This latter I chose, and ere long found I had chosen well.

The particular stretch of the South Wales coast I was now passing over—Wentloog Level—has a character all its own, and is as un-Welsh as can be. Consisting of broad alluvial marsh flats, defended from the inroads of the sea by an earthen bank of great antiquity built along the shore, it is more like a bit of East Anglian fenland than Wild Wales.

On Wentloog Level the fields are nearly all unfenced, either by hedge or hurdle. Instead, separating one field from another, are wide ditches or creeks full of still water bright green with scum. And this lack of fences, together with the winding nature of the road, endows the countryside with an aspect pleasant and open as any wanderer could wish.

As I approached the seashore I became aware of music and voices raised in singing, and happy laughter. Not only that, but the road traffic, which seemed to be heading all the one way towards the sea, grew so dense that I had to hug the wayside verges to let the unending stream of push-bikes, motor-cycles, and cars go past. The people, too,

were loaded down with picnic impedimenta and tricked out in their summer Saturday afternoon best, so that I wondered where I was coming to

I hadn't to wonder long, though For arriving soon at a farm which appeared to be called Tyn-y-Pwll I found a lot of cars parked and people streaming out on to a grassy level by the sea where were shelters, refreshment booths, picnic parties, and a swimming-pool thronged with mixed bathers

So there in the bright sunshine, amidst that happy crew, I lay all the glorious afternoon forgetful of my tramphood I lolled on the turf and gazed far out across the Severn to the opposite coasts of Gloucestershire, Somerset, and North Devon In fancy I roamed once more upon yonder distant hills the green Cotswolds, far back of Bristol, the breezy Mendips, behind Weston-super-Mare, the heathy Quantocks further west, and gusty Exmoor on the horizon's rim

In fancy I saw myself on a beautiful summer evening about the time of sunset laboriously climbing the celebrated Hill of Porlock on the coast of Somerset A terrifically steep hill it is, all motor-worn and rocky, and sound legs and lungs are essential for its conquest And here I met a tramp, a fellow-countryman, who had walked that day from Ilfracombe, a matter of some thirty-four miles, and who was full of dark warnings of what awaited me over the hill

"For heaven's sake, man," said he, as we sat down for a smoke, "don't go any further to-night Between here and Lynmouth there's no shelter whatever Exmoor lies up there And do you know what that's like? Man, it's like the Moor of Rannoch hoisted up on Lochaber!"

Now, although, I never let myself be influenced

by another tramp's account of the country he has passed through, still, on this occasion, if only for company's sake, I decided to create a precedent and go no further that night

"Look here," continued my mate, "if you stay here and get a fire going, I'll beat it down into Porlock and bum some tommy. What do you say?"

I agreed, albeit somewhat dubiously. "But you'll come back, won't you, chum?" I asked

"Oh, I'll come back all right!" he promised, and swung away down the hill

But come back he never did. And I don't blame him. For he had already done thirty-four miles that day, and it was too much to expect him to climb down such a whale of a hill as that of Porlock, knock at the village doors for provender, then climb back up again to go halves with a perfect stranger. Anyhow I lighted a fire—one of the biggest and brightest fires I've ever lighted—and sat by it waiting in the darkness

My situation was romantic in the extreme. For here was I a thousand feet up a sheer hillside, sitting by a camp-fire under the stars. And while away below, between two great bluffs of land, lay Porlock and its bay, far across the Severn could be seen the stormy coast of Wales, and one wild sea-light twinkling for mariners

Also, behind me loomed the vast desolation of the Forest of Exmoor, of which the parish of Oare is the scene of the sweetest love-story ever told. And as I gazed up and into that charmed but bleak domain I was forcibly reminded in turn of girt Jan Ridd and the savage Doones of Bagworthy, and of the exploits of rollicking Tom Faggus, the highwayman, and his strawberry mare, and of Lady Lorna herself, most lovely and most lovable of heroines

Next morning, however, after a night in which my sleep was absolutely ruined by the antics of two wild-maned horses whom the light of my fire had lured down from the wastes, I set out for Lynmouth along the ridge of Exmoor. It was like walking on the world's high roof-tree. For hereabouts the road rides dizzily along a crest of land nearly 2000 feet high, having the sea on one side, far away down, and the moors on the other, fallen away south. But these latter were invisible in the soaking mist that eternally drifted across the upland wilderness. And there I walked, and walked, and continued walking for weary rain-sodden miles, until, footsore and heartsore, I was become a veritable burden to myself. Then a man on horseback rode out of the mist, looming gigantic, and presently I was dropping down the tremendous declivity of Countisbury Hill into Lynmouth by the sea.

The golden afternoon wore its slow length away until the merrymakers began to depart and until the hunger call made itself manifest to the tramp who had sat amongst them like the skeleton at the feast. Up I rose therefore, and, reluctantly turning my back upon Tyn-y-Pwll and its happy shores, slunk furtively forth on the grub-trail.

I was successful, however. A huge wedge of apple pie and a tumberful of new milk rewarded my peg-legging. These I disposed of, and, twilight having by then descended over the eerie flats, I made tracks for a sort of byre erection beside the road—and called it a day.

There was a bit of hayloft up under the rafters, so there I climbed and was soon bedded down in one of the cosiest skyppers it has been my lot to have dossed in. But as I am lying on my back rolling the usual cigarette preparatory to pounding

my ear, the heavy silence is abruptly rent by the door being bashed open by a big boot, whereupon in walks a policeman with a farming-looking bloke in tow

"But I tell you I saw him!" the cop is assuring the yokel "He jumped the ditch and came in here I saw him! A regular tramp he was, too"

"Well, you can see for yourself, George," replied the other, indicating the emptiness of the byre with a sweep of his arm "And that hayloft up there, it wouldn't bear the weight of a rat Look!" And, while my eyes bulge out in my head like snooker balls, with apprehension, he pokes at the boards beneath me until two of them fall with a rotten clatter to the floor

That seems to satisfy the suspicious George, for he departs with his pal and leaves me to get my breath back as best I can But hardly have they gone when, without a moment's warning, the whole of the rotten houndjacapivy gives way beneath me, and together we crash down!

After rearranging the bed I lighted up and lay smoking in the darkness It was as silent as the grave From afar off, across the marshes, the presence of the sea made itself palpable From afar off, but away behind, I seemed to sense the wild high hinterland of Glamorgan with its great system of coal-mining valleys and its swart townships And when I fell asleep it was to dream of black mountains with red-glowing hearts, wherein swarmed myriads of night-toiling gnomes

During the early hours of the following morning the rain beat a devil's own tattoo on the byre roof But I was safe, try it ever so hard it couldn't get at me And I scoffed and jeered at it until in demoniacal despair it battered itself to death in a last terrific burst of torrential downpour

As the day was Sunday I lay well on into the forenoon before resuming my way. At last, however, I rose and took the road in a glorious morning of blue and gold with all the green earth refreshed and rejuvenated from its recent bath.

Just outside of Cardiff I met an Irishman, likewise on the Toby, who told me he had woke up that morning to find himself sleeping off his liquor in an open field under the pouring rain. He looked it, too. Also he showed me a terrible wound in his leg, about six inches long, which he alleged had been given him a week ago by a wolfhound away up in the Valleys. Then he tapped me for the makings.

That Sunday in Cardiff was one of my lucky days. I could do nothing wrong. The first household I visited on mumper's business rustled me up a proper Sunday morning breakfast, besides donating me a bob. Then at dinner-time I was invited in by another household and feasted on the best, in the dining-room, as a guest of the family, given a fistful of fags and one-and-a-bender, and wished God-speed.

I don't know whether my luck had anything to do with it, but I must say that I found Cardiff a wonderfully pleasing city. I stayed in it all Sunday and Monday—sleeping overnight in the Mill Lane kip—so had leisure to take stock of things. I strolled down the cosmopolitan Bute Road, and had a look at the Bute Docks, but it was in Cathays Park, in the centre of the city close to Cardiff Castle, that I found something especially wonderful.

This was the impressive assemblage of really noble buildings, whose equal, it has been said, is not to be found in all Europe. And I can well believe it. The buildings are the City Hall, the Law Courts, the University and Technical Colleges, the County Council office, the National Museum, and, most

noble and beautiful of all, a veritable poem in stone, the Welsh National War Memorial To enter this latter shrine and sit by its playing fountain in a summer twilight is to know a peace deeper and holier than any other upon earth

Yet, impressive as is the architectural grandeur, whenever I think of Cardiff I think of something more grand and impressive still, not built by hands, but of Nature's fashioning It is this Following a tremendous downpour of rain which deluged the city for about an hour after noon on the Monday, the sky quickly cleared and the sun shone Then the fugitive clouds that flecked the heavens mustered themselves together to form the most gigantic single cloud I have ever seen Beginning at the horizon and ascending to the zenith, this pure white mass of piled cumulus, dazzling magnificently in the golden sunlight, towered into the blue in untellable splendour And I had eyes no longer for man's mere brickwork

However, the road was calling, my money was squandered to the uttermost farthing, and so, in a great gale of wind in the ruddy evening, I bade Cardiff adieu and limped into the sunset.

## LAP THE THIRD

THROUGH SOUTH WALES    CARDIFF TO  
GOWER AND CARDIGAN

Into the west—In a hedgebottom—After the Deluge—Swansea Bay—A caravan—Oh, gypsy!—A pilgrim shadow—Night in the New Forest—Light without heat—The weird sound—A haven of rest—The Mumbles—Port Eynon by the sea—The world's end—*Wandervogel*—"Weisst du nicht?"—A preacher of the Word—Llanelly—A prospect—Welsh butter—A practical joke—Lost—"—and the road again"

You are now to imagine me, at this stage of my odyssey, as singeing the wind westward out of Cardiff town on the long, long road to Swansea

You are to imagine me swiftly limping into the sunset and leaning forward on the gale with my blood on fire You are to imagine me forever squinting down at my own two ragged-trouserred legs as I travel, and marvelling mightily at their effortless functioning And you are to imagine me glorying in my toughness and yelling it on the blast, fit, free, faring where I list, my mistress still the open road and the bright eyes of danger

On and on I sped into the furnace of the west Always, away up on my right, were the wild hills of Glamorgan, and always, on my left, were the fertile fields and meadowlands of the coastal plain These remained always while the fleet miles flowed away behind

Then the sun went down, the sky paled, and darkness descended But I didn't stop Speed was in my blood, and I must needs walk it to a standstill



On I sped, therefore, until the twelfth milestone out of Cardiff was passed and Cowbridge lay behind. Then, and only because I felt raindrops pinging against my cheek, did I slacken my stride and begin looking out for harbourage.

But, even as I looked, the rain-demon—which has an especial spite against bedless tramps—rang up the curtain on the water scene, and the play began.

Fast and furious did the rain come down in sheets, in bucketfuls, in watercart loads, soaking, blinding, bewildering alike in its suddenness as in its utter pitilessness, pouring, pouring, pouring. And there was I caught like a rat in a trap, skelping hither and thither under its deluging cataracts, demented, soaked into the very flesh, shelterless in the midst of open country in the black and dark night.

Then an evil fate guided my squelching, spouting feet to a thrice accursed hole in a hedgebottom. A mad place it was to make a bed in under the rain, but I knew no better hole. So in I crawled, spread my patch of leaky waterproof on the cold wet mould, pulled jacket and coat off, and, spreading them on top of me, drew my head and limbs in under them to lie curled up like a snail in its shell.

Age-long hours of acutest misery followed. The rain sluiced upon the hedgerow, the hedgerow sluiced upon me its heavy freight of water, wetting me to the marrow, and the wind arose and fiendishly began hurling the frozen rain in upon me from all sides until my brain reeled and my body shook violently in a continuous fit of ague.

All night the rain teemed, the wind blew, and sleep sat not upon my eyelids. In the chill, grey, miserable hours of the wet dawn I dozed a little, but, as my dreams were all nightmares of nerve-shattering frightfulness, this brought me no com-

fort So when white day was come I forced my frozen, shuddering self into my sodden garments and waded out through the grass to the road

I felt like Noah setting foot on earth after the Deluge The countryside looked as though it had lain on the bed of the deep, like some leviathan, and was now come up to breathe, shedding streams Not a man, not a beast, not a bird was stirring Nature was drowned, and I was a ghost journeying for my sins through a silent land

In the course of the morning, while I plodded the weary miles away, the rain changed from a heavy vertical downpour to a thin slanting drizzle, and until just before entering the market town of Bridgend on the Ogmore I met nobody at all except another ghost journeying through the silence We neither halted nor exchanged the usual "How do!" which road etiquette demands We merely gazed at each other, nodded significantly, and passed on

At Bridgend I broke my fast Going up to a house I knocked at the door, and before I knew what was happening found myself with a parcel of nourishment under my arm and a huge basin of sweet, milky tea steaming between my frozen palms And did I sip it genteelly with my pinkie up? Did I! I set it to my lips, and, by slow and easy stages tilting it through the degrees of a right angle, drained it to the last delicious drop—tea-leaves and all And believe me, that tea went down my legs to my toes and up again!

Between Bridgend and Pyle, five miles further on, the rain stopped, the blue sky appeared—and the sun shone The trees tossed and puffed up in the breeze, the birds piped, and the road became peopled Up went my shoulders, my knees became straight, and when I skirted the slopes of Mynydd Margam between Pyle and Port Talbot I could stop to

admire the luxuriant banks of oak trees clothing its base

Port Talbot, the outlet for the coal, copper, and iron of the Afon valley, marks the beginning of the Black Country of Wales. From there on through Aberavon and Briton Ferry, which is the port of Neath, to Neath itself, the scenery is depressingly industrial and smoke-begrimed. The houses are miserable, the people are poor, out-of-works abound, and altogether it is a countryside in which no traveller, least of all a tramp, cares to sojourn.

Hereabouts one gets a view of Swansea Bay well worth looking at. Sheltered from all unfavourable winds by an amphitheatre of rugged mountains, and curving gracefully to its termination at Mumbles Head on the Gower peninsula, the bay falls not so very far short of being grand. That it has been likened to the Bay of Naples I know, but maybe this is purely because the dirty pall of reek which eternally overhangs Neath is suggestive of Vesuvius.

At Port Talbot I fell into talk with an aged Welshman who had navvied over all Scotland. He was at the laying down of the West Highland Railway, he said, and went on to relate at great length some of the wild goings-on in which he had taken part with his fellow-navvies. Also he drew for me, with his stick in the mud, the exact location of the Navvies' Graveyard near the Devil's Staircase in Glen Coe, wherein every two bodies out of every three, he avowed, were murdered bodies. Then the rain came down, and we had to part.

On I plodded through the dreary dripping landscape, my boots glucking aloud like a couple of suction pumps and my saturated clobber weighing like lead and chilling me to the heart. The wind blustered, the rain teemed, the country stank, and I fell to cursing the wanderlust in me that had

brought me to so sorry a pass But ere long, like a sunbeam through the raincloud, an encounter I had here banished my gloom for a spell

Up the road behind me came the merry jingle of harness bells and the rapid clip-clopping of pony hoofs, and there passed at a spanking rate a gypsy caravan of three light carts which I immediately recognised as having seen before somewhere At the leading pony's head ran a young girl wearing a long tight skirt reaching to her ankles and a slouch hat pulled over her dark hair and eyes Then I remembered It was the identical caravan that had passed me, hundreds of miles back, one night in the heart of the New Forest on the greenwood road out of Brockenhurst !

On went the three vans—each dusky driver greeting me with a flourish of his whip as he passed—and so on and up and over the hill And when the last one was disappearing below the line of the road the gypsy in it turned and looked back And I fancied he was calling

“ Out of the dark of the gorgio camp,  
 Out of the grime and the grey  
 (Morning waits at the end of the world),  
 Gypsy, come away ! ”

But alas ! it was only fancy So under a hollow hedge I crawled, and, for a couple of hours in the death-dumb autumn-dripping gloom, imagined myself back amidst forest glades

We'll never make Lyndhurst to-night, Johnnie  
 It's further than we supposed Let's look out for  
 a place to sleep in You take that side of the road,  
 I'll take this , and sing out when you find one

Isn't it quiet here, and eerie ? Nothing but broad

white road, greenwood, and sunset sky Look ! There's a lot of wild New Forest ponies over yonder, chum, see them ? Haven't they got long tails and wild eyes ! They say they're outdoors all the year round, summer and winter Must be hardy But they've nothing on me and you, boy, eh ? But what's yon ? Good heavens, look ! It's gypsies ! Three pony vans Don't they jingle ! But, shush, yon bloke's going to say something Stand in while they pass

Oh, gypsy !

" You're travelling late, brother " Did you hear him ? I thought the beautiful word *brother* was dead And, " Good-night, brother ! " And did you see how the girl leading the last van looked at us ? No ? Good lord, you must be purblind

Isn't her hat real gypsy, Johnnie ? And her black hair ? And her strange eyes ? And—look here, chum, I won't cheese it There's something up with you to-night What's eating you, anyway ? Are you tired ? Is it your kip you want ? Well, after all, we *have* come a long road to-day, me and you But cheer up, old pal, be happy Ah, there we are ! See, yon looks like a good place Get to it Mind the bramble

And so, into the green gloom of the forest we plunge, I and my pilgrim shadow For Johnnie is but a creature of the fancy my familiar, my other self, my ghostly travelling-companion It is he who safeguards my sanity in the wilds It is he who steps out with me on lonely roads It is he who is exceeding close to me in the twilight, in the evening, in the quiet watches of the night Without him I should be puggled and doolally

When we meet on the roads, you and I, you see me mouthing to air and gesticulating to nothingness, don't you ? And you think to yourself I'm the daft

one But I'm only communing with Johnnie, that's all Nor am I alone in retaining a ghostly communicant Other tramps retain them

But this'll not pay the old wife her ninepence, I'm talking too much Let's have a fire, a big fire, something like a fire And a bed also Not perfumed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon, but matted with turf, quilted with fern, and spread under an oak tree

Well, down is the turf, down the fern fronds, and the pack-sheet sack I picked up along the road—it, too, is down And all lies trig in the cosy fire-light, spread under an oak tree This is huge and tall Ivy and other creepers, with stems as thick as steam-pipes, coil like anacondas round its bulky girth And while green night and rosy fire-glow play about its feet, its top-gallant tips are sprayed with the gold of sunset

So here, where the world is quiet here in this garden of Proserpine, I lay me down And the moon rises Like a huge lantern it swings high amongst the branches, sending down long straight shafts of ethereal light into the dark below

The world seems far off, with its coarseness, its vulgarity, its vexing childishness, its intense interest I must get back there soon, and into the thick of it Not for me the monastic cloister or the hermit cell Instead, the fighting of the humans, and the joy of pain pain the healer, pain the beautifier, pain the panacea for all ills

But this is the New Forest, not the forest of Arden Nor am I the melancholy Jacques Melancholy! Who would be melancholy in a place like this? What is there sombre about these mighty trunks? Does fear lurk behind the brushwood that I should sit with my back to it? And because the fallen and rotten deadwood of the forest is

a-scream with murder and sudden death, is that any reason I should be deaf to the owl ?

*Whoo-oo-oooh !* Listen to it How empty and high it makes the forest seem ! But there's nothing doleful in the sound of it It's cheery I like to hear it It is as much a part of the greenwood as the trees themselves, or the death shrieks, or the ghostly dropping of rotten limbs There they go ! A little snap, then a woody rattle, then a precipitous cataract of thuds and biffs, ending up with the last and most resounding thud of all—and there's another log for the fire !

Well, I've got those awful boots off, always a painful business, so now for the grub

H'm ! Bread and cheese, and still more bread and cheese, and bread and cheese again Hampshire, it seems, is just as bread-and-cheesy as Wiltshire But never mind Beggars can't be choosers It's a pity the tea's finished, and the sugar, and the milk But milk I never had, sugar's a luxury, and tea's only for old wives and young parsons Wish I had some However, my bottle is full of brook water It'll do instead So I set it among the embers to boil And I put the root to toast, and the mousey to toast, yes, and I put myself to toast For summer woods are so cold at night It's a guid fire, and naebody in't

Ah, that wasn't bad ! Better a supper of bread and cheese where appetite is, than a stalled ox and indigestion tablets therewith So now to roll a fag and light it at a glowing coal And notice how it retains the wood aroma ? Better than Havanas, what ?

Look ! Yon's a glow-worm Like a little green lantern Marvellous, isn't it ? Light without heat Let it lie in your palm and see how like a caterpillar it is Only, the last two joints on the

underside are all lit up with a pea-green radiance  
Miraculous !

The moon shines bright It must be getting late  
How quiet and still everything is ! Yes, and how  
much quieter and stiller when a wood-noise breaks  
the quietness and the stillness ! If the groves were  
God's first temples, why don't ministers renew their  
lease on them ? But when I think of ministers I  
think of seat rents And the thought of seat rents  
here, at such an hour, is sacrilege So let me rather  
listen to the choir of woodmice and the eerie churring  
of the night-jar Such sermons are bonza I'll  
turn in

Something must have wakened me What was  
it ? The fire's out, so I must have slept an hour or  
more Ah, now I remember The sound ! The  
weird gong-like sound ! It mixed with my dreams  
and took the form of light, winged light, like the  
Holy Grail " rose-red, with beatings in it " Rising  
and falling it struck terror to my heart Whatever  
could it have been ? Listen ! Ah, how awful ! It  
comes again Through the high pall of the forest  
it reverberates, and panic grips me, and primitive  
fear A sound, a weird gong-like sound, it is, but  
composed of many swiftly-recurring minor sounds  
And it strikes the senses not as a sound, but as a  
light, a winged light, like the Holy Grail " rose-  
red, with beatings in it " Whatever can it be ?

Cold drops of nervous sweat begin to break out  
all over me, then suddenly my tensed body relaxes  
as the explanation bursts upon me Buck-hounds—  
the Forest buck-hounds ! I remember passing  
the hunt kennels last night and being nearly over-  
powered by the stench of dead meat Phew ! I  
didn't know hounds could howl, or *knell*, like that  
It put the wind up me, it did I think I'll have a  
smoke



But as I lie blowing smoke wreaths upon the forest floor a thin wraithlike greyness filters in through the tree-tops. Then a lone bird trills—*tweet-tweet-tr-r-rill*!—and the forest awakens. And I rise shivering to relight the fire.

By and by I got up on my pins and continued my route. Houses, houses, and more houses, squalid, smoke-begrimed, heart-sickening, some partly in ruins, some built on what looks like slag heaps and brickfields, houses, houses all the way. And where the houses end reek-belching works begin. Even the Abbey of Neath, once the fairest in all Wales, has not escaped contamination. Under the upas tree of industrialism it stands blighted and cankered, an eyesore to men. The poisonous fumes of a nearby copper works forever play about its ruins, and if I recollect aright it stands in the middle of a cinder dump.

Right through Neath I squelched until I came to where the road forks. One branch follows the river up the beautiful Vale of Neath, past mountain woodlands, rushing waterfalls, and echoing gorges. But as I had had quite enough of rushing water for fortnights to come I chose the other branch, leading to Swansea, and began looking out for a place to go into.

About a hundred yards further on I found exactly what I wanted. This was a haystack protected from the weather by a rounded corrugated iron roof upheld by stanchions. It stood in the midst of a private paddock, which it would be unwise to be seen crossing, so I was forced to make a detour of nearly two miles round to the back of it, where runs the railway, before winning into its haven of blissful rest. Then I burrowed down in the heart of the hay and fell cosily asleep hearkening to the rain drumming on the iron roof.

## THE MUMBLES

In the morning I awoke to find the rain off and the sun blazing blisteringly from a cloudless sky

Half an hour later—for my feet had to be coddled, and my warped boots worked into shape—I was bowling merrily along the road to Swansea. But not for long, because the day was too sultry for bowling. So, in spite of the blighted landscape that borders the road hereabouts, I lazied so industriously by the sun-baked wayside that it was full afternoon when I reached the tinplate town on the Tawe.

Now, as Swansea was the last big place between me and the wilderness, I decided to lay in as much provender as its housewives could afford. All afternoon, accordingly, I worked the back door stunt to such a tune that early evening found me on the road to the Mumbles with the tails of my overcoat a-bulge with no less than ten parcels of tummy timber.

The Mumbles is the popular name given to the village of Oystermouth and its environs on the Gower peninsula, and is distanced from Swansea about five or so miles. A light railway, such as runs between Campbeltown and Machrihanish in the Mull of Kintyre, links up the big town with its holiday resort, but naturally I scorned to make use of it, taking the road instead.

A beautiful road it is, too. From it the view of Swansea Bay and the opposing mountains of Glamorgan is one not willingly forgotten. Then, as Oystermouth is neared, an ivy-clad Norman fortress makes its picturesque appearance on a green hill overlooking the village, and tall limestone cliffs rise sheer from the roadside.

The Mumbles proper are two rocky islets, on the outer one of which stands Mumbles Head lighthouse. And here the road rises and cuts through the cliff

into Bracelet Bay—and glorious Gower lies all before you

After loitering amid these scenes for a while I climbed up through a veritable city of shacks and bungalows and struck inland. But I didn't walk far. As night wasn't far off I decided to postpone my explorations until the morrow and in the meantime get bedded down in a hollow bush which I had discovered by the wayside.

After an undisturbed sleep beneath the open sky, followed by a large breakfast supplied from two of my ten parcels, I continued my way. Over airy ridges I went, and down dusky glens, over heathy moorlands and alongside purling trout-streams, over white roadways and upon emerald turf I was in my element.

Through Bishopston I passed to Gower Inn, then by Parkmill and Penmaen—getting bewitching sea-peeps of beautiful Oxwich Bay with its yellow sands and blue waters in the passing—and so, skirting the long ferny chine of Cefn-y-Bryn and touching at Knelston, I came at last to Port Eynon by the sea.

This is a tiny fishing village where smuggling was popular in the bad old days. Its one long stony street leads down over the tufted dunes to the broad sands below. And here, under the irritating supervision of a policeman who seemed to have large doubts as to the honesty of my intentions, I lay among the breezy towans demolishing the contents of other two parcels and between whiles emptying a big bottle of orange-crush which I had bought in Port Eynon's one shop with some coppers mooched in Swansea.

From the Port a narrow footpath winds along the bracken-fronded clifftop to Rhossili Point, five miles away, and the stretch of coast it traverses is reputed to be the most magnificent in all Wales. Nor did

I find its magnificence at all over-estimated For, after returning the empty orange-crush bottle to the shop and making sure they gave me my penny back, I hit upon this Elysian path upon the cliff and snootered with delight at my discovery

It was fine being alone there high above the sea In the seventh heaven of ravishment and knee-deep in sun-scorched fernery I tramped along from one wild clifftop to another—past Culver Hole of smuggling fame, and Mewslade's fossil beach—and always with the grey ghost of Lundy Island riding the sea-  
rim Then at long last, when the sun was dipping his big pot face in the cool ocean, I reached the weather-beaten village of Rhossili

I imagined I was come to the world's end For at Rhossili the road peters out on a pier, and the confused wanderer finds himself stranded on the edge of the great Bay of Carmarthen, looking far out to Caldy Island, and so on to Tenby in Little England beyond Wales And at his back, stretching from the Beacon to Burry Holms, rises the gusty ridge of Rhossili Down, with its hoary cairns, cromlechs, and tumuli

I lingered there watching the sun sink, then turned about and retraced my steps along the heights until I found a place wherem I could spend the night Then, gathering great armfuls of bracken, I made myself a nest in a little grotto overlooking the sea, and lighted a brisk fire of sticks to keep me company And after disposing of two more parcels I lighted the butt-end of a cigar I had picked up previously, and lay in my seaward-gazing eyrie smoking meditatively until the stars came out And when I finally turned in it was to dream of Rhossili's Spanish galleon sunk in the sand, and of dollars and doubloons, French luggers, and brandy kegs

Next morning after a before-breakfast plunge in

the brine I bade my little haven a regretful farewell and cut across the heather to the road

That day was a scorcher, and I sauntered along through the golden haze in a continual sweat Penmaen, Parkmill, and Gower Inn I again passed, and it was at this last place that there occurred an incident.

Up the road towards me I spied a couple of strange things coming They were two young bare-headed lads clad in leather jackets, khaki shorts, and wearing most marvellously efficient hiking shoes — Each carried an ash stave and bore—bore is the word—a rucksack, and so very much hung about with accoutrements were they that at first I imagined Alice's White Knight and Daudet's Tartarin had taken a vacation from bookland and were together touring Gower

The taller of the two lads was additionally burdened with a light patent tent, and, as they were passing, the pole of this slipped down and got entangled with his legs, so that, to misquote Milton, he literally

“ Came and tripped it as he went,  
On the light fantastic tent ”

This caused me to guffaw in a vulgar manner, and that did it The tripped one instantly turned and poured out upon me a torrent of voluble and most abusive German!

Then I knew them for what they were They were a couple of Germany's rambling youth *Wandervogel*, wander-birds or birds of passage, doing Wild Wales And while the tent-bearer continued vilifying me, and while I tried to appear ignorant of what he was saying, I noticed that on both their staves were tacked about a dozen thin metal plates bearing

embossed views of German towns These ran from the handle to the ferrule, thus Heidelberg, Cologne, Coblenz, Aachen, Mainz, Wiesbaden, Worms, Bonn, Weimar, Carlsruhe, etc,—mementoes, doubtless, of places visited

With an illiterate air I listened to the flow of bad words and enviously eyed my curser's marvellous hiking shoes About killing Paddy Doyle for his boots I had heard, and had the wander-bird been alone I don't say but what, just to inherit his shoes, I might have demonstrated to him that Dusseldorf held no monopoly in Rippers

But his pal at last got him to shut up In broken English he told him to have respect for 'the gentleman'

"Gentleman!" derided the other in his own lingo, "he's no gentleman He's only a low fellow, too stupid to know what I'm talking about Come on!"

So they went But before they rounded the bend I shouted on them to halt, which they did Whereupon I played my trump card Pointing meaningly at the angry one's shoes, I called out

*"Weisst du nicht, dass jeder muss ein Paar Narrenschuhe zerreißen, zerreisst er nicht mehr?"*

And, leaving the two *Wandervögel* standing in a state of visible thought, I departed trolling *Röslein auf der Heiden*

From the Arcadian precincts of Gower Inn I sweated onward through the heat until I came out upon the great Fairwood Common in the heart of Gower Here, flinging myself down under a shady bush and loosening everything, I rolled a cigarette Mexican fashion and lay watching the cavortings of the wild ponies which are a feature of these parts Long of tail and shaggy of mane they roam at will over the common like

their mates of Exmoor, Dartmoor, and the New Forest

After a while a man in an old tail-coat comes up and squats down under a bush on the opposite side of the road. He must have squatted on the point of a brick or something, though, for he immediately ups with a yell and starts blaspheming the cause of his pain with a vocabulary that couldn't have been naughtier.

Through time, however, he exhausts himself, and, picking a softer place, sits down and takes out and commences to read—a Bible! Of course, at this I laugh, and let a look of intense scepticism disfigure my face. And the old bloke, whose ears are tufted like a lynx's, he looks up and sees me for the first time. He blushes like a beet, pitches aside the Bible, and jumps up mad.

"Young man," he splutters, standing over me, "I'll have you know that I'm a preacher of the Word, and that I suffer no sinner to sneer at my profession. You're possessed of a malignant devil, you are, and so help me God, I'll leather it out of you!"

With that he offs with his belt, and I shut my eyes and await the wallop. But it never comes. So I open my eyes again and take a dekk at the queer fella. He's buckling on his belt. And if his face was as red as a beet before, now it's as white as a mangel-wurzel.

"Hello," says I, getting up on an elbow, "you haven't changed your mind about leathering the malignant devil out of me, have you, sir?"

"Yes, indeed, young man," says he, the sweat standing big on his temples. "Yes, indeed. For were I to leather the malignant devil out of you, as you richly deserve, there are only two places it can go into. Into these ponies," pointing to the wild things cavorting on the heath, "and into myself."

And as I'm not over sure which of the two it would make for first, I'm letting it stay where it belongs Good-day ! "

Picking up his Bible from the road he takes his queer self off belt, tail-coat, lynx ears, and all

Those ears of his, by the by, were the strangest imaginable Each was covered with a thin growth of black hair which at the top of the ear developed into a veritable tuft such as a lynx has It was freakish It gave him quite a satanic look

I lay under the bush a little while longer, then sweated along over Fairwood Common until I arrived where three roads meet I took the one leading to Killay, and in due course, after passing through Killay and Gowerton further on, found myself on the bridge over the Loughor river that separates Glamorganshire from Carmarthenshire

Leaning on the parapet I watched boys bathing in the stream and scampering over the great stretches of sand that here abound the Bacas Sands And further down the Burry Inlet are yet more sands, the Llanrhidian Sands, than which nothing bleaker or more howlingly desolate can be imagined Then I continued my way, past miserable houses, following seemingly interminable tram-lines, into the squalor of Llanelly

I didn't halt even for a minute in this reeky place Instead, thanking my stars that it was the last dirty big town I should have to pass through, I hurried into it and out of it as fast as my legs would let me

But the road, one of four all leading sooner or later to Carmarthen, fifteen miles away, is a terror From Llanelly it climbs, and climbs, and better climbs until you think you are back in Glen Croe toiling uphill to Rest-and-be-Thankful It winded me and no mistake



While I am resting, all out of puff, halfway up, I see another tramp striding downhill wearing—a dinner-jacket! At least that's what it looks like, for the lapels are as shiny as if faced with silk. But when the bold lad passes I get a closer view and see that it's no dinner-jacket he's sporting. I see that he's merely been using those lapels for pocket-hankies.

At length I reached the top of the hill. And what a prospect was there! All of the Gower peninsula lay stretched out far below, with Swansea Bay on one hand and Carmarthen Bay on the other. And out across the Bristol Channel, in the dim south, loomed the bluff coasts of Devon and Somerset, and Lundy Island as ever was. Then, when I faced about north, all the windy uplands of Carmarthenshire lay before me, with their quiet vales, rolling hills, shining rivers. And in the far north-eastern background, on the borders of Brecknockshire, ran a broken chain of mountains to the sea.

With a final look at South Wales I right-about turned and dwindled away up the long perspective of the road. Although this wasn't so steep, yet for all that it still climbed. And the higher it switch-backed its way into the heavens the colder grew the air. But I worked fast on the treadmill of the miles, making the bright blood tingle and glow. Then twilight came down, the cold took on a bitter edge, and I found myself amid hill country. I passed through a village in the dusk, and knew I was in Wild Wales indeed. At their doors stood the folk in twos and threes, talking Welsh. It reminded me of the clachan of Ballachulish. Some flung me a kindly "Good-night!" as I slunk past, and it came as readily to their tongue as the Welsh equivalent would have done. The men were tall and gaunt.

and muscular, and about the place hung a wild, uncouth air that was romantic in the extreme

The cold grew bitterer, the road mounted still higher, and when a haystack ultimately caught my eye I thankfully made tracks for it. It stood at the foot of a hill, though, so that the ground about it was soft and marshy, and ere I reached the stack my shoes, stockings, and trouser legs were wretchedly mucky and waterlogged.

After a freezing night spent in the hay I arose with the sun next morning and hit the highway. I passed through more hill villages, and managed, by instalments, to win breakfast. But what I remember most about the grub I mooched hereabouts is the butter on the bread—real Welsh butter. It was a rare delight. And the housewives plastered it on so thickly, and it was so golden, and so tasty, such a change from the margarine of the South!

The road to Carmarthen was a long one, but the day was so glorious I didn't notice the miles. I recollect bathing in a river and sitting afterwards in the shade of its trees watching the fish dart over its sandy shallows. Then, shaved, washed, and feeling fit as a fantod, I entered Carmarthen.

This pleasant little town stands, with the inevitable castle, on the banks of the Towy. It is said to be the birthplace of Merlin, the wizard-sage. But as that old lad has about as many reputed birthplaces and graves as the Scottish Ossian (or, as some say, the Irish Ossian), we must swallow this fact with a lot of salt. Also, I looked in vain for the coracle men who are likewise reputed to be seen on the Towy paddling about like ancient Britons. So, as the townspeople weren't as generous as they might have been, considering it was Saturday after-

noon, I burned no daylight in shaking the uncharitable dust of Carmarthen from off my shoes

Outside the town I met a tramp carrying over his arm a coat turned inside out. We both halted to exchange news of the Toby, needless to say, and in the course of our talk the tramp told me how he had been the victim of a practical joke perpetrated by some roadmenders

It was like this. He had been lying by the roadside sleeping in the sun when those wild minds came along. Having with them their tar-spraying apparatus, and seeing the tramp's coat lying by his side, they thought, I suppose, that he was fair game. And when the tramp finally awoke from his siesta and took up his coat, can you guess what he discovered? He discovered that those roadmending jokers had not only sprayed the outside of his coat with tar, but that they had actually sprinkled the tar with road-metal

"And look at it," says the tramp, opening out the maltreated garment. "It's like a suit of blooming well armour, and I've only to button it up like this," says he, suiting the action to the word, "and stand it upright like that, and I've got a rainproof, windproof, draughtproof—*tent*!"

From Carmarthen I now struck in a south-westerly direction through an uninteresting countryside to Bancyfelin and St Clears. But the truth is, I was lost. I didn't know where in the gazetteer I was heading for. Nor did I ask anybody to set me right. I always make a point of trusting my own bump of locality to get me out of any labyrinth I may find myself lost in. Accordingly, confident that I should hit the right road sometime, somewhere, I just wandered up any old lane that tickled my fancy. Nevertheless, two days, two nights, and fifty tedious miles were to elapse before I won clear

of the maze And of my wanderings during that time I possess only the dimmest recollection Nor does my diary help me any The pages therein dealing with this period are so stained with rain-water as to render my pencilled notes almost indecipherable All I can make out is the names of villages, among which I see the strange but beautiful name of Red Roses Then come Tavernspite, Prince's Gate, Clynderwen, Blaenffos, and lastly, Cardigan

Of St Clears I remember only that I passed a sleepless night in a dew-drenched meadow by a river bank Of Red Roses I remember only asking at a door for something to eat, and being given "Half a pound of eating apples, thank you Close the front gate" Of Tavernspite I remember only sleeping in a barn among 'red-hot' hay, with terrible rain battering all night on the iron roof Of Prince's Gate, Clynderwen, and Blaenffos I remember only long, lonely lanes, cultivated fields, small farms, wild mountain moorlands, and riding in a mason's motor-van for two bumping miles through beautiful sunshine

In short, all that I can truthfully say I remember of what transpired between my leaving Carmarthen and my coming into Cardigan can be summed up as simply being

" Only the road and the dawn,  
The sun, the wind, and the rain ,  
And the watchfire under the stars,  
And sleep, and the road again "

## LAP THE FOURTH

### CORNISH RETROSPECT

The Delectable Duchy—A skypper in a thousand—Bude—"Did you knock, sir?"—A glorious memory—The Cornish sea—What the shell says—The lovely Trebarwith sands—A swim—What money cannot buy—At Land's End—St. Michael's Mount—Through a golden world—The poetic leaven—In a secret skypper

BEHIND me was Clovelly toy-like, un-English, amazing Clovelly, with its long street propped upon the cliff like a ladder on a wall, with its donkeys and sledges, with its Lilliputian tea-shops and its streams of climbing visitors, with its artists and their easels, with its trampers and their ruck-sacks I had left it behind, but it doggedly clung to me Had it been? Was it real? Did it actually exist? These questions I pondered as I bade Devon adieu

In front, then, was the Delectable Duchy the pleasant Cornish land of saints, crosses, and squab pies—to say nothing of the accursed saffron cake or the god-gifted pasty But of that anon And I was happy, I was jubilant For if Devon had done me exceeding well as regards tommy and seascapes, and as regards wet weather had drowned me white as a nigger, the tales that were told me in Bideford town depicted Cornwall as a Devon-de-luxe, lovelier, kindlier, with superlative knobs on Wherefore my feet swung swiftly toward the better land

I crossed the border, and thrilled to the contact A desolate enough place it was in all conscience,

a blasted heath, moors, moors, and more moors as far as eye could reach, and what trees there were all leaning inland away from the wind. But afar off on my right was the sea—the blue, blue Cornish sea, bluer and more wonderful than I had ever pictured, a summer sea of romance such as we sail on in our tide of dreams.

It lay in the west, too, in the mystical, magical west, than which no air is dearer to the Celt. It spoke to me, beckoned to me, and my feet raised dust clouds in their swift response.

But soon the sun set, and twilight saw me climbing like a thief through the window of a hut, my pockets bulging with tommy begged in Kilkhampton. And that hut proved a skypper in a thousand. There were shavings galore, empty corn-sacks, piles of old newspapers, believe me, I was landed in clover all right. So there I built a bed about half a foot high such as a king might envy, wrapping my boots in a clout for a pillow after the fashion of the road, and sat down cross-legged to my cadged-for tommy.

There were three paper bags full, each brimming over with stomachic joy—golden-crustéd honey bread heavy with sweetness, crisp cubes of saffron cake brilliant with saffron, thick meat sandwiches, luscious tartlets, chunks of cheese, and—and—and the god-gifted pasty.

Oh, lord, that pasty! That cold Cornish pasty! That meat-stuffed, onion-stuffed, spud-stuffed pasty! Food for the gods, to be eaten only on bent knee, with head reverently bared, with eyes raised to heaven!

Next day was a frizzler. The countryside pulsed under a heat wave, so that I was an unconscionable time a-coming into Bude. But, actually, the bucolic policeman who held me up at

the point of a rapid-fire questionnaire, outside the little town of Stratton, retarded my progress even more than the heat did

Bude by the sea, with its tufted towans, its happy beaches, and its sea-pools in the sand These I remember well I lay on the cliffs until I was fairly kippered by the sun, then descended to the beach and plunged headlong in For when the sea recedes it leaves ponds behind in the sandy hollows, and bathers love them

And west from the rainbow barrens of Labrador blows ever the wind of ocean, cold and keen and pure as the morning And I climbed through the golden sunlight to the cliffs again, and saw headland after headland stretching far away to the southward, one after one, until the blue haze hid them And bidding Bude adieu I took the road, following southward

That rockbound coast was a rare delight And so, through a hill-and-dale labyrinth of sea-lanes, I hunted the twilight for a place to sleep in But a bed of wild mint with dew upon it was all the earth offered me, so there I thankfully slept until sunrise awakened me

Then later on a thing happened As I walked along the road looking for somewhere to wash at I spied a farmhouse by the wayside Now, there were no hens about the door nor dogs about the gate, so I entered and knocked But as nobody answered I peered in through the window Silence reigned, and all was dark So I knocked again, this time until the yard re-echoed, but nobody answered Whereat, turning to a huge rain butt which stood beside the door I leisurely set about the business of washing

And I did more than wash my face and hands I took off both shirt and singlet and washed them,

too, before putting them to bleach on a green nearby. Then, for it was Sunday morning and very quiet, I took off my remaining garments and stepped into the butt. And all this time there was no life in the house nor any stir upon the road. And when I stepped out again, having no towel, I ran about naked in the yard that the sun might dry me. And I shaved, and darned my clothes, and rolled and smoked cigarettes until the washing was sufficiently dry to don.

Then I tidied up so that everything stood as before, and went away. Scarcely had I gone about a dozen yards, however, when I saw that the road was the same I had come by, so I retraced my steps. And as I passed the farmhouse again the door opened and a maid appeared.

" Good-morning," she said. " Did you knock, sir ? "

But I, as I fled away up the road in the morning calm, could only fling back to her—" N-n-not exactly ! "

I visited Boscastle, then the weather changed. In from the sea came a mist, a weird Cornish mist, until my coat was as if sewn with pearls. And I found some eggs, I remember, in a place where I shouldn't have gone, and baked them in a fire in the mist before entering Tintagel—wild Tintagel by the Cornish sea. And I stood alone in Merlin's Cave below the Castle munching dulse and listening to the boom of the surf, the moan of the wind, and ancestral voices prophesying war.

What a cave yon is ! Fit, I imagine, for midnight meetings between demon lovers. And the mad, hoar spirit of eld is in that fearful place to quicken one's heart-beats. And the weird mist broods over all.

My tramp to Land's End is a glorious memory.



I have only to close my eyes to bring back again that loitering by the Cornish sea: the lovely Trebarwith sands, with their painted shallows; the grey quarries of Delabole; the moors above Wadebridge, the blow-hole on Porth Island; the nuns of St. Agnes, where children threw stones at me; Carbis Bay, where a dog bit me; splendid St Ives, and the heather to the southward, the waters of Zennor; the lassies of Bottallack; and Land's End shimmering through its tropic day

Rolling stones gather no moss, they say. But who the devil wants to gather moss? Is not a mindful of memories of a happy, golden summertime, such as was vouchsafed me west of the Tamar—is not this, I say, worth all the mosses of muscology?

Here's one of those memories Judge for yourself

This beach is Trebarwith beach, and these sands are the celebrated sands of Trebarwith And to the north and south, as far as eye can range, they run like a causeway of pure gold bordering the sea

What a sea it is that they border! The Cornish sea, wide and wild and of an incredible blueness, the deep blueness of deep blue dye, glittering and spangling in the sunlight It is amazing, not like water at all In contradistinction to a painted sea it appears to be a sea of paint, blue paint And you fancy that were you to dip down into it you would emerge, like an ancient Briton, in a fast coat of woad

On such a sea did Odysseus sail after his sad leave-taking with Calypso Across such a sea fled Jason and the Argonauts, bearing the dark witch- maiden and the plundered Fleece Above such a sea, with shining shield and venom-dripping head, did Perseus wing his wing to Andromeda Over such a sea the Sirens sang of caseful days and

ambrosial nights From out of such a sea did Venus rise, foam-born and beautiful

On these level beaches, as yet, there is no print or press of human foot to shatter the solitude For although the sun is hot and high in the heavens yet these sands are as desolate as the sands of a desert shore

Behind us in the rocks the gulls scream and quarrel with weirdly human cries, and, as now and again one of them sails on motionless wing far overhead—alabaster against the blazing blue—we are convinced that the white purity of its plumage can be seen through Because when two gulls cross, one above another, the shadow of the higher is discernible through the lower one's wings

More than half the horizon is open sea, shipless, smudgeless, wide open sea Nothing breaks its taut blue line It appears like a solid ridge over and from beyond which, one imagines, nothing can come or go But all the lure of the unknown invests it One hint of shipdom, a sail, or a smoke wreath, along its leagues of length, would instantly capture the eye, engage the mind, and so bring to earth the imagination For between an empty horizon and one with a ship on it lies a world of difference

But now the shadow thrown by the cliff on the sands has shifted Let us shift with it, therefore, and—— But, here's a shell However did it get here? Shells are rare on these sands It has whorls, so let us put it to our ear and listen-in to its murmuring

No, if you are about to inform me that the sound in the shell is the blood flowing in the ear passages, I'll not listen to you, you low highbrow Make away with yourself, you iniquitous knowledge-hound Do not arguefy or show me Encyclopædias of phonology will not convince me This sound,

Goth, is the sea's voice It tells what Little Paul  
 couldn't quite catch what the waves are saying  
 Listen—

“ I remember the black wharfs and the slips,  
 And the sea-tides tossing free ,  
 And Spanish sailors with bearded lips,  
 And the beauty and mystery of the ships,  
 And the magic of the sea  
 And the voice of that wayward song  
 Is singing and saying still  
 ‘ A boy's will is the wind's will,  
 And the thoughts of youth are long, long thoughts ’ ”

That is what the shell says Its sad sea-sound  
 evokes a vague disquietude of soul, at once dolorous  
 and happy It whispers sighingly of the world of  
 seas and shores, from the black volcanic beaches of  
 the North to the lime-white coral beaches of the  
 South In it is Kerguelen Land, and Tahiti, and the  
 thunderous bellowing of their hugeous seas In it  
 is the wind's voice as well as the voice of the waters,  
 the treble of the Trades no less than the diapason of  
 the Deep

This murmuring shell is reminiscent of Thoreau's  
*Cape Cod* A marvellous book, that When you are  
 reading it—it is all about beaches—you seem to hear,  
 emanating from the printed page, the same low  
 sighing sound as lurks within these whorls You  
 fancy, too, that you feel blown sands pinging against  
 your cheek and the brine tang salting all the air

I am glad we decided, I and you, Johnnie, to come  
 here It was worth the mile walk down the combe  
 from the main road To have missed basking on  
 Trebarwith sands would have been inexcusable,  
 especially after what the signpost said For written  
 thereon, if you remember, was not the mere blunt  
*To Trebarwith sands*, but instead *To the lovely*

*Trebarwith sands* So here we are And our terrible night spent in the rain at Tintagel is but a memory Though wasn't it confusing to find, on coming in from Boscastle, that where we expected to find it Saturday forenoon, lo and behold! it was Sunday at tea-time?

But look there! Yonder's a ridden horse galloping along the lonely sands On the very edge of the tide, too, where the sand is firm and wet and shining How it is travelling! See, it's almost abreast of us now a chestnut mare with long flowing tail and mane coloured a pale gold, like some prodigious horse from out the *Arabian Nights* What a splendid beast it is, and how perfectly the rider sits it Listen to the rhythmic beat of the hoofs on the hard packed sand "I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three" Look how the spurned dunes fly up behind And there they pass, growing smaller and smaller, until they vanish behind the distant headland

A swim? Why, yes We have sunbathed here long enough Let's race to the water's edge Ready? One, two, three—go! Ah, I thought you would stub your toe I'll run on myself How springy the sand is, and how cool the wind feels blowing against our sun-scorched skin Oo-oo-oh, it's c-cold In we plunge We have lost our breath, but remain under Keep on swimming hard until the glow comes That's it Now we come up Now we shake the water from our hair and eyes, and, facing seaward, strike out with slow, easy strokes, feeling stronger than giants, to where the long blue seas gather for the shoreward procession

This is life This is living How fit we feel How the blood tingles in our veins How gloriously the sun shines How near at hand seems the horizon But—steady there Look out Here comes a seventh wave How it towers and totters far above

us, seeming heavens high, an impending sapphire sea, a white-veined wall of liquid, living marble, frothing and creaming along its threatening length, iridescent in the sunlight like bubbling, fizzing nectar. Watch out. It's breaking. It's coming down. Down it comes. Quick. In with us, in through the solid-seeming heart of it; in through its glossy, bottle-green wetness, opening our eyes on a green-gold, watery world. Then up, as our ears sing, and out to the air and the sky and the sea and the gulls again, to hear the hurling crash of the comber as it smashes to smithereens on the shuddering sands.

Ah, we feel better after that, though a little breathless. Let us loll again on the warm sands and have the sun and the wind towel us dry. Notice how, when we lie flat on our back we feel only the sun, then, when we sit up, only the wind? Between the two we will be kippered in no time. Our skin is already begun to burn. Smell the clean, salty nip of its burning? I like to smell that. It is health's own savour. And it is corked in no blue bottle either, nor is it wrapped up and sealing-waxed. Apothecaries do not stock it. It is something that money cannot buy nor influence procure. It is health's own aromatic aura.

Couldn't you loiter here on Trebarwith sands forever? With the gulls wheeling, the winds blowing, the tides flowing, and the far horizon always blue and always beckoning? Yes, but only if the sun stood as once it stood at Ajalon, and as it stands forever above that apple-island in the west that Arthur went to where falls not hail or rain, or any snow, nor ever wind blows loudly, but that lies deep meadowed, happy, fair with orchard lawns and bowery hollows crowned with summer sea.

But all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Yonder,

in the form of excursionists, come the image-breakers  
to people the sands We'll give them the beach,  
Johnnie, we've held it long enough

And so, dressed, and sweltering in the heat, we  
climb up the combe past the quarry pools to the  
highroad, bidding the beach adieu

Good-bye, Trebarwith !

So fingered and footed has Land's End been by  
the ubiquitous and all-destructive tourist-hound,  
and so thick laid over with the pale cast of bought  
and abandoned cigarette packets, caramel papers,  
film cartons, and such-like vandal litter, that its  
rugged grandeur is more honoured in the observance,  
from a distance, rather than from the beach

But Land's End impressed me in spite of that  
I could imagine how gloriously a tempest would  
break thereon But it took some imagining For  
the heat wave of 1928 was just then getting into  
its stride, and not a breath of wind from off sea or  
land came to temper the almost tropic aridity of the  
atmosphere And I lay gasping on the hot rocks  
like a fantod with the jim-jams

Moreover, to make matters worse, my water-  
bottle was drained dry, my stomach literally moaned  
with hunger, and the First-and-Last Inn in the  
whole of England was the one knockable house  
visible—and no tramp knocks at an hotel if he  
can avoid it ; while, to pile Ossa upon Pelion, a  
policeman who had just ridden in on a bicycle now  
stood looking at me in a manner all too eloquent  
of his desire to come closer and get better acquainted  
So, as I could fare no further south, I turned my  
burning back on Land's End and headed north-east  
through the golden summerland

Outside of Penzance I beheld the first of England's  
palm trees . proper, sub-tropic palm trees, against

a turquoise sky and a sapphire sea, leaning to the zephyrs along the coast of dreams, beautiful, alluring, whispering the marvel palms of the Cornish Riviera

Through Penzance I passed on the shady side of the road until the esplanade began. Then I sat down in one of the shelters. But if walking in the sun drew all the moisture out of me, sitting in the airless shade did even more. I could scarcely breathe, my body burned with a dry oven-heat, and the white glare of the sizzling esplanade gave me a tic above the eyes. Accordingly up I got and went wandering on again, feeling like Crusoe in his goat-skins.

But the stupendous and glorious sweep of Mount's Bay proved a panacea for all my ills. In viewing it I forgot my fatigue, I forgot even my hunger. I could hardly believe it, however. For St Michael's Mount is too picturesque for the spectator to accept as real all at once. You have to sit, as I sat that day, on Marazion beach, and gaze and gaze again. It is a veritable island of the fay, seeming to float on, instead of to rise from, the waters. And I likened it to a rare jewel in the ear of a houri, to Shelley's pumice-isle in Baiae's Bay, and, in defiance of astronomy, to a glittering star within a crescent moon.

After four hours' lingering on the sands my outraged hunger would be put off no longer, so from this feast of beauty I had to tear myself away and go foraging on the grub-trail into Marazion. Here the gods smiled upon the tramp. He was taken in at the first house he knocked at, he was welcomed as a guest, he sat down with the family to their evening meal. And, after a long leave-taking and a shaking of hands, he strode majestically forth on the road again, cigar smoke issuing from mouth and nose.

Perianuthnoe beach I rested at Prah sands saw me for a space And that night near Helston I bivouacked on a lonely combe-side Then all next day, through the blazing noontide weather, I sun-bathed on Gunwalloe sands, drinking deep and often of the ice-cold rock-drip, and shifting as the shade shifted Then a motor-cyclist caught me up and hurtled with me south out on to the Lizard, mile after mile But never, it appeared, had a tramp begged in Lizard village, and the good folk there didn't seem to understand Accordingly, after watching for a while the blue horizon crowded with shipping, and the turners in their workshops turning the serpentine stone, I turned back empty over the road I had ridden

Penrhyn, Falmouth, Truro, Probus, and St Austell, like milestones of a dream odyssey, I seem to see as through a golden haze For the sun never clouded, no rain fell, and everything drowsed in a golden silence Night followed day, the morning came, and I padded like a ghost through the thick white dust of the highway, meeting other ghosts, carrying water with me where no rivers ran, and wondering always at the gold in everything For I seemed to be faring through a golden world The sun was gold, the sea was bridged with gold, the air seemed full of the glittering dust of gold—aye, ye gods, and I even dined on gold !

For now was the summer of my great content made dolorous winter by the cake called saffron I breakfasted on it, I lunched on it, I had it for tea, I had it for supper I felt as Midas must have felt when he had nothing to eat but inevitable gold At every door I knocked at that accursed saffron cake was handed me—and always by the bagful So very hospitable are the Cornish folk, you see, that when a beggar asks them for food they think to



give him a treat by offering the best in their larder—saffron cake. It is a delicacy as dear to the cockles of the Cornish heart as haggis is supposed, by Sassenachs, to be dear to the Scotsman.

Imagine any kind of sweet currant bun or cake coloured an intense, eye-dazzling orange-yellow. That's saffron cake. And I ate so much of it (they would give me nothing else!) that soon I felt like a human yellow yite. The saffron so got into my system that everything I looked at seemed to take on a saffron hue. It made me physically ill, too. So that from St Austell onward my tramp was nothing more nor less than an ignominious, hell-for-leather retreat from a surfeit of saffron.

Between St Blazey and Lostwithiel I fell in with company in a romantic fashion. The road hereabouts, lying high above the sea, gives one a fine panoramic view of the surrounding country. I couldn't miss this, so down on a low wall I sat to admire it in the sunset, and, somewhere within me, the poetic leaven began to work. I had just finished Tennyson's

“Sunset, and evening star,  
And one clear call for me,  
And may there be no moaning of the bar  
When I put out to sea”

when from over the wall floated a mellow cultured voice in answer

“Twilight, and evening bell,  
And after that the dark,  
And may there be no sadness of farewell  
When *you* embark”

At this I immediately jumped down on the other side of the wall to investigate. And guess what I

found I found below the wall a secret skypper and in it two bearded tramps sitting over a drum-up of Van Houten

One of the twain was a bona-fide vagrant, but—shade of Matthew Arnold!—the other turned out to be a scholar “wandered from the studious walls, to learn strange arts and join the gypsy tribe” And it was he who had so aptly capped my quotation

Well, we gripped hands in silence, and after a supper of cocoa and the inevitable saffron cake we rolled and lighted cigarettes, then lay talking far into the starlight And never, I can imagine, did skypper resound to talk such as was bandied to and fro that night in the secret skypper above Lost-withiel The conversation ranged from the Nebular Hypothesis to the peculiar recurrence of the letter ‘z’ in Cornish place-names, and from Burns’s epistles to the ‘life’ and ‘wife’ of the *Nibelungenlied*

But we were only tramps that pass in the night, so, when morning came, while the scholar-gypsy and his vagrant pal hit the highroad west for St Blazey, I burned the wind eastward for Devonport ferry, and the palms and terrace gardens of Torquay.

## LAP THE FIFTH

### INTO CENTRAL WALES CARDIGAN TO ABERYSTWYTH AND THE DOVEY

A fine road—A matter of feet—Picture of a tramp—" *Dim Saesneg* "—Puzzling horror—The Cockney—In Aberystwyth—" I'm damned if I know! "—Entering the lion's den—So-long—Sarn Cynfelin—The luck of the Toby—Cockney swan-song—In the Welsh Tyrol—Back to the primitive—Primeval longings—The robin—Inadequate Crusoes—Shade of Huck Finn!—Back to civilisation

It was mid-afternoon of a day of alternate sun and shadow when I crossed the old arched bridge over the river Tivy and entered the county town of the garden shire of Cardigan

I didn't linger there any appreciable length of time. As the little place is noteworthy chiefly for its total lack of anything worthy of note, I merely made a rapid but not altogether successful canvass of sundry back doors before passing on out of the town by the road that leads to Aberystwyth, forty miles away

It is a fine road this, and switchbacks over the breezy uplands in a manner guaranteed to bring a glow even to the palest cheek. And though it doesn't exactly run along the coast yet it parallels it always a few miles inland and gives ever and again exquisite glimpses of the blue waters of Cardigan Bay laughing in the west

Along I rattled at a great pace, filling my lungs with a mixed draught of ocean ozone and zephyr of mountain brew, wondering at the same time what

kind of bed the gods would lay down for me that night For my long tramp throughout the south of England, coupled with my already respectable sum-total of miles in gallant Wales, was at last beginning to tell upon me, so that the idea of nightly rest appeared more and more pleasant, besides recurring constanter to my thoughts

Also, there was the matter of my feet, or rather of my shoes These were size tens and were given me, 'way down in Hampshire at a place called Chandler's Ford, by a policeman disguised as a Law-abiding ratepayer who had caught me coming round from a back door with peglegged tommy up my waistcoat and duly arrested me But that's another story I'm telling you now about the shoes he gave me These, as I said, were size tens, and the original owner must have thought to save his soles by walking on the outer edge of his heels For when I inherited the shoes those heels were already on the down grade Thus I, too, was forced to walk on the outer edge of my feet And the more I walked on the outer edge of my feet, you can understand, the more acute became the angle of the shoes So that at the time I am now speaking of I was walking the roads as bandy-legged as any cow-puncher

Oh, it's all very well to laugh But it's no laughing matter when a naturally straight-legged man is forced to walk as though carrying an invisible barrel between his legs It's torture And although one can get a little relief by walking along the crown of the cambered roadway, nevertheless passing motors make it impracticable for one always to walk there

But this enforced bow-leggedness was by no means all You see, when I got the shoes I had cut myself out a pair of insoles from the red rubber

inner tube of a motor-tyre which I found in a rubbish dump on Salisbury Plain, and as the hundreds of miles I had traversed since then had worn my soles right through, these red rubber insoles were now constantly annoying me by bursting out through the worn soles and flapping up and down with each step I took, like the red slaverling tongues of a couple of wild beasts

So there you have a picture of me as I appeared on that road out of Cardigan a dirty, unshaven tramp, waddling along as bandy-legged as a gorilla, and every now and then stopping with a curse to stuff back the flaming insoles into my shoes And, if you desire me to finish the romantic picture, I will add that from time to time either of my hands could be seen to stray automatically to an oxter and there perform a necessary claw-like act

I ask you Is it humanly possible to travel hundreds of miles of dusty roadway in clothes that are slept in night after night, to travel so for months on end and still travel *alone*?

To continue On I shambled over the long backs of the windy uplands, passing footering little villages on the way Here and there blackberry bushes bordered the road, and, although it was still early in August, the number of perfectly ripe berries I picked was surprising Then at length the sun sank into Cardigan Bay And as I shuffled along in the chill twilight on the look-out for the usual roosting place, I amused myself by fancying that it had sunk under the blue waters of the bay to shine for a spell upon the ruined cities and fortresses that lie drowned away below

Mile after mile flowed under me without my finding even the ghost of a skipper So finally I gave it up as a bad job and went and lay down in the middle of an open field for spite

Fortunately the night was remarkably warm and windless, so that I slept as soundly under the bare poles of heaven as I would have done under a roof-tree

With the morning sun I arose and trod the tarmac until I came to a little cottage that was sending up a long slow spiral of blue smoke into the golden air I knocked at the door, and an old Welsh carline appeared But as "*Dim Saesneg*," was her sole reply to my tearful tale I wished her good-morning and shoved along to the next caravan

My luck was out, though Every cottage I stopped at seemed to house only Darbies and Joans who had nothing for the breakfastless tramp but that maddening "*Dim Saesneg*" Then I tried sign-language I pointed meaningly down my gullet, I rubbed my stomach, I smacked my lips But it was bootless With a quizzical twinkle in their eye those old humbugs greeted my every gesture with a negative shake of the head and the paralysing "*Dim Saesneg*"

With my fast still unbroken I came about midday into the little coast town of Aberayron A tiny harbour, a shingle beach, an old fort or camp called Castell Cadwgan, and a cluster of tidy dwellings is all there is of Aberayron, except, of course, the magnificent view commanded from the top of the cliffs above and below the town From there can be seen the entire crescent coastline of Cardigan Bay, with the blue ranges of Plynlimon, Cader Idris, and the North Wallian Hills piling away behind

Though I stayed barely half an hour in Aberayron yet in that brief period I breakfasted, dined, had afternoon tea, and laid in snacks for supper Then, as I hit the main drag, by way of dessert I stripped a couple of miles of blackberry bushes of their

luscious fruit, and finished up with five large plums that grew in an orchard close to the road

Llanarth I passed through, also Aberarth, and because of my bandy-leggedness my pace was that of a snail. At every house I came to I asked the womenfolk if they had a pair of old boots they didn't need, always accompanying the request with lifting up my feet in true mendicant style to show the state of my soles. But each time I did this the womenfolk started back with an exclamation of horror and hastily shut the door. Which puzzled me. What could there be so horrifying about a boot with the sole worn through? I couldn't understand it at all.

Outside the village of Llanon, about eleven miles from Aberystwyth, I lighted upon a ruined cottage by the wayside and decided to stop there overnight. But this proved an eerie experience. The roof had formerly been thatched with long thick ropes of some woven stuff like tow, and these now hung down from the beams like so many hangman's nooses, rustling and swaying about most uncannily with every breath of wind.

Next morning I took the road in a thin soaking rain that was to continue all day, and, if my feet were bad before, they were now a thousand times worse. Like the pistons of a pump those flaming rubber insoles of mine sucked in the water from the road at every step, only to belch it forth at every other step. And the noise they made sometimes caused passing motorists to draw up and examine their tyres.

Then I met the Cockney. I was busily engaged plucking breakfast from the heart of a rain-drenched blackberry bush when the bush suddenly divided to disclose a wild laughing face leering up at me with its mouth stained purple with bramble juice.

"'Ello, mate!" says a Cockney voice "You on the George Robey, too, ain't you?"

"Sure," says I, "I'm on the Toby, too, chum Did you kip here last night?"

"You bet I did," replied the Cockney, rising and shaking himself like a terrier, and I observed that he was little more than a lad, and wore clothes that fitted him like a sausage skin

"I say, chum," says I, when we were back on the road heading together for Aberystwyth, "take a look at that," and I lift up my feet as I had done when cadging boots, "Now, what do you see?"

"Good 'eavens!" exclaims the Cockney, starting back in horror as the womenfolk had done, "Your feet are all red-raw an' bleeding! Go' blimey, wot a mess!"

Then light burst upon me The enigma was explained It was those flaming red rubber insoles of mine that had evoked all the horror Like the Cockney, the womenfolk must have thought that the bright red surface which they saw through the holes in my soles was the bright red surface of bleeding flesh!

When this was explained to him my new-found china laughed as heartily over the joke as I, and thereafter we journeyed on through the teeming rain in the gayest of spirits Hence, laughing and singing, and happy as a brace of young gods, we descended upon Aberystwyth

About halfway down the long hill into the town a policeman on a bicycle passed and raked us fore and aft with a broadside of inquisitorial glances

"That's torn it, Jock," says the Cockney "We'd better separate Last time I griddles in this bloke's town the cops pinched me for wot they called putting myself in a position to receive alms And if they catches me chumming with a bloke like you, they'll



arrest both of us on sight See? So you go that way and I'll go this I'll meet you in the kip So-long "

"So-long," says I, "and if I don't show up after tea-time you'll know I've been run in for swiping shoes Good hunting!"

So we parted, my china to try his arm at the chanting lay and I to bruise my knuckles at the knocking stunt And only once during the afternoon did our trails cross It was in a back street There, working slowly down the middle, was my pal with a tear in his voice singing *Onward, Christian Soldiers*!

Aberystwyth I found to be a most beggable little town Being a holiday resort there are always good pickings for tramping beggars In money I made about a bob, besides filling my coat-tails with parcels of miscellaneous eatables

So planned is the town that, in my going to and fro, I was compelled to pass and repass the police station nearly every ten minutes, and, as there chanced to be two splits loafing outside, I came in for a considerable amount of suspicious-eyed scrutiny Besides annoying me this made me uneasy For I knew that at that moment there was a man in Aberystwyth searching in vain for the spare pair of shoes he had left out at his own back door—which pair of shoes I had stolen and was now wearing

I was an all-round tramp, I would have you observe a pest, a parasite, an unscrupulous picker up of unconsidered trifles But I was at war, don't forget, as all penniless vagabonds are at war, with settled and Law-abiding society Though had you asked me why I was at war I should have answered like any soldier man

"I'm damned if I know!"

And exactly as the premier Powers of Christendom

scrap and jettison for the duration of their great wars truth, justice, humanity, and everything worth while, so I had scrapped and jettisoned for the duration of my little war the distinction existing between *meum* and *tuum*

But to return to our splits My passing and re-passing, then, had so whetted their curiosity that they were on the point of stopping and arresting me as a suspect when I ran under their guns, so to speak, and brazenly stole the fire from their cannon For as I passed the two for what must have been the twentieth time that afternoon, I suddenly halted, said "Excuse me, please," and walked between them into the police station—pilfered shoes and all!

It was risky, of course, but it worked Innocently inquiring of the station sergeant where the local kiphouse was, and being given polite and very elaborate directions as to its whereabouts I thanked him fervently and walked straight out again past the two splits—a free man, vindicated, and above suspicion For who but an exceptionally upright and conscious-clear individual dare enter the lion's den? Who but a Daniel!

When I reached the kiphouse I found my chanting china already there toasting cheese over the kitchen fire and dancing attendance on a drum of tea that summered on the red-hot hob So after adding my whack of provender to the groaning board I joined him in a feast that lasted from tea-time to supper-time—and called it a day

That night I occupied the most uncomfortable bed I had yet lain in It was a flock shake-down, you are to understand, and so thick, and soft, and warm, and luxuriously comfortable was its yielding cosmess that all night long I lay tossing feverishly about within its blood-boiling embrace, unable to

sleep. It was only when I hurled everything off and rolled on to the hard floor, in the small hours, that I finally managed to fall asleep

In the morning, after a tasty breakfast of dog's body and kill-me-dead washed down on lashings of Tancy Lee, the Cockney and I quitted the university town and headed north in the Machynlleth direction

But those purloined shoes of mine proved the truth of the old adage which sort of says Heaven help those who help themselves! They were about a couple of sizes too small, and so tightly did they fit that I hadn't gone a dozen miles before both my heels were skinned raw As a consequence of this I had to halt outside the village of Bow Street—ominous name!—and make incisions in the back of both shoes And my feet were so swelled up by then that to get them back into the shoes I had to strip off my socks

Even at that I was a crippled wreck I could only waddle along at the rate of a hippy Methuselah So when the Cockney and I came to the cross-roads at—a long breath and count three—Llanfihangel-geneurglyn, I decided our ways must part

"So-long, chum," says I, after he and I had argued the toss for some time, "on you go and never mind me. I'll see you to-night in Aberdovey, if I manage to get there So-long!"

"Well, Jock," says the Cockney, very reluctantly, "if you want me to go on, all right I'll meet you in Aberdovey—if you ever get there So-long!"

Accordingly, while my pal took the long inland road that leads by Tal-y-bont to Machynlleth, and so round the head of the Dovey estuary to Aberdovey itself, I took the short sea-road that runs by Borth to Ynys-las, where a ferry crosses to Aberdovey exactly opposite

But I didn't immediately take the road Instead

I doffed my terrible shoes to ease my terrible feet, and, manufacturing a cigarette, lay on my back smoking and weaving dreams around that wonderful thing, Sarn Cynfelin

This Sarn Cynfelin is a long sea-reef, or, as some have it, a Roman causeway that runs for miles out and down into the sea nearby And it leads to the drowned cities and fortresses of the lost land-under-wave, Cantref-y-Gwaelod, the Lowland Hundred For you must know that where now the wide waters of Cardigan Bay sparkle in the sunlight, there, in the long ago, smiled the pleasant acres and happy homesteads of another Wales But in rushed the sea upon a time, and the Lowland Hundred was no more Yet still stands Sarn Cynfelin, bridging the living and the dead And if ours was the receipt of fern seed, who knows what unquiet spirits, what unrestful promenaders and ghostly traffickers, might be seen o' nights passing and repassing between the two ?

From Llanfihangelgeneurglyn I hirpled painfully over the few remaining miles to the village of Borth A long straggling place this is, consisting of a single street of houses facing a stormy shore, and from it the wild barbaric hills of Merioneth are seen rising far to the north, and ever the wind blows, and ever the air is filled with sand

I struck it rich in Borth I was invited into the kitchen of a boarding-house and feasted to absurdity, all the family standing round, while I ate, with heaped dishes of food ready in their hands, talking Welsh and English nineteen to the dozen Then when the father of the house, who had once worked aboard the *Metagama*, learned that I too had sailed in another C P O S boat as assistant steward, he doubled and trebled his attentions until I had to cry mercy And when latterly I succeeded in

tearing myself out of their hospitable clutches I was loaded down with money, food, socks, ties, etc — with everything bar shoes. For though the boot cupboards of the entire household were ransacked on my behalf, nothing suitable was forthcoming.

After lounging on the windy sands of Borth for a while I made tracks for the ferry at Ynys-las, which I hoped would land me over at Aberdovey long before my Cockney pal. But, alas! Ynys-las was there sure enough, but of the ferry there was not the slightest trace. Nor could I see anybody to question concerning the ferry, for it is a deserted district hereabouts — nothing but bleak shores and lonely marshlands, — so, willy-nilly, I had to alter my plans.

Instead of skipping over to Aberdovey, which was plainly visible on the other side of the mile-wide estuary, I should now have to work round the sea-marsh of Cors Fochno to Tre-Taliesin on the main road, and so on through Machynlleth before reaching it. And you can imagine how tantalising it was, considering the awful state of my feet, to see Aberdovey only a mile distant across the straits, yet knowing that to reach it I should have to toil along nearly twenty miles more of highland roadways.

However, it couldn't be helped. It was just the luck of the Toby. Accordingly, talking volubly to myself nevertheless, I set out on the quaking road round Cors Fochno, and by dint of short stages and long rests at last reached the village of Tre-Taliesin on the main road. But my feet were too sore to allow me to visit nearby Bedd-Taliesin, the grave of Taliesin, prophet-bard of old Wales, so I just resumed my soliloquy and hurled along in the twilight until a hole in a hedgebottom mercifully appeared and swallowed me up for the night.

After an undisturbed sleep I awoke next morning

to a grey dawn and downpouring skies But I didn't get up The hedge above me grew too thick in every direction for the rain to reach me, and it was only at long intervals that solitary drops managed to percolate through the matted greenery and splash down on me So, these excepted, I was as dry as dry and jake-a-loo

Sitting up cross-legged on my groundsheet, therefore, I opened the big poke of tucker which I had been presented with in Borth, and made a leisurely and wholly satisfying breakfast of the bread and cheese, meat-pie, and pickled herring that came first to hand That done, I cupped my hands and held them under a steady trickle of rain-water until they brimmed over, and took a long filling drink from them Then I rolled a cigarette—using brown paper to make it look like a cheroot—and sat back in the seventh heaven of delight smoking and watching the rain

As I was sitting thus, wondering at what time on the previous night my Cockney pal had reached Aberdovey, I became aware of some bloke passing on the road below singing with all his soul So I parted the thick growth screening me, and, peering through, got the surprise of my life The bloke on the road was my Cockney pal!

In the gayest of spirits he strode along, his wild face flushed with health and his clobber as sausage-skin-like as ever, warbling like a lark I thought it best not to hail him, though With my terrible shoes and crippled feet I should only prove a hindrance to him, the tortoise is no mate for the hare, I had best let him go on alone And so it befell And the last I saw of my chanting china was the long thin form of him diminishing up the rain-swept road to Machynlleth, making a swan-like end, as it were, fading in music

Thereafter, for a couple of hours, I remained smoking and speculating on why the Cockney hadn't gone on to Aberdovey as we had planned. Then, screwing my courage to the sticking place, I gritted my teeth, shut tight my eyes, and essayed the frightful task of pulling on my shoes. And half an hour later, bathed in the sweat of pain, I took the road in a rainstorm.

Onward I crawled through the thunderous deluge, skirting on the left the green levels of Cors Fochno about the Dovey estuary, and on the right the foothills of a highland wilderness. Past Moel-y-llyn and Foel Goch I went, and past the mouth of the beautiful Cwm Eion, the 'Artists' Valley,' to the flooded village of Eglwysfach. Then on again I hurled past Pen Careg-gopa and the renowned Llyfnant Valley, where I must needs halt despite the rain and the pain to gaze away up through the rent curtains of the mist to the wild grandeur of Bryn Moel and Drosgol, and so on and up to the loftiest lord of all the great mass of mountain stuff that is Plynlimon Fawr, where spring the well-heads of the romantic Rheidol, the lovely Wye, and the stately Severn.

Ah, of a surety I was now in Wales! Left behind forever were the sunny uplands and low green valleys of the country of castles, and in their place lay all around and above the rocky fastnesses of the Welsh Tyrol. Land of the llyns and the glyns, the nants and the dyffryns.

In the neighbourhood of the Llyfnant Valley my feet gave out utterly and went to my head. I must have gone suddenly berserk, somehow, because, when I came to after tearing off my terrible shoes, it was to find myself fighting my way across a river in high spate to a wooded island in the middle!

I stayed there two days and nights, a Robinson

Crusoe if ever there was one With branches of trees and old newspapers I constructed a crazy half-hut, half-bower sort of contraption that sheltered me from the rain Then, difficult though it was, I got a fire going, and, stripping myself naked, dried my sodden clothes over the fire and folded them away until I should need them

Like a wild man of the woods I lived on that island clothed only in my skin, sleeping under a roof of my own making, cooking my food in the hot embers, and with a brave little robin as my sole companion And all the time of my sojourn the rain never ceased Sometimes when I grew tired of squatting before the fire I would step outside and stand upright under the downpour, as under a shower-bath, until all my body burned red with icy heat And as the glad blood went and came I would yell out in sheer animal delight, exulting in my savagery

Sloughed from me were not only the disease-breeding habiliments of civilisation, but also its crippling conventions I was as were men when the world was younger, simpler, less entangled in needless and nonsensical complications I had bridged the hiatus of historical time and harked back to the primitive And although it was only for the space of two days and two nights, yet, to me, who was clockless and regardless of the hours, it seemed as long-drawn-out as threescore years and ten

To be cast away on a desert island, to emulate Crusoe, to be one with the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fishes of the sea, to live the life, to be marooned of men, to be an Adam again in an Eveless Eden

We all of us have desired these things, blindfold us how we will And be we old men, young men, or youth, we feel away down in the bottomless



deeps of us a strange stirring of primeval longings, and an urge, irresistible, for us to take heed of them. For in the core and crypt of us we are pagan and atavistic, savage and uncivilisable. Our surroundings are ahead of us hundreds of thousands of years. We can soar in the air, but can we fly? We can go under the sea, but can we swim? We can move over the face of the earth without using our legs, but can we walk a mile without hurt to our feet? No, for we all of us are tree-apes new come upon the ground, and our soles as yet are scarce adapted to the change.

The past displaces the present and I sit again under that crazy shelter of boughs and old newspapers.

Crazy as it is, though, it serves its purpose admirably. It sheds the rain. And on such a day as this is, that's something to be thankful for. The down-pour, even for Wales, is unbelievably torrential. It seems as though the atmosphere throughout all its bulk were turned to liquid, and that I sit rather in the solid wet heart of a thundering cataiact than in a shelter under the mere rain.

I cannot hear my ears. What with the ceaseless battering of the massy wetness on the hut roof immediately over me, and the mighty voice of the waters roaring past the island all round me, I can bellow at the top of my lungs and yet not hear myself bellow. The atmosphere, not content with being solidly wet, is solidly soundful. I live in a world of sound, unending, brain-numbing, body-shaking sound.

But I have a fire. That makes up for much, if not for all. And though it took me a sad hour of solicitous coaxing to get it going, it was worth it. Listen to it now. How it hisses in the rain-blast. How it blazes up in the wind-eddies. And how cosy,

comfortable, and homely it makes this travesty of a hut seem

I have been cast away on this desert island now for a century or two, or so it seems. Actually, I suppose no more than four or five hours have elapsed since I set foot on its quaking soil. But so long have I sat motionless by the fire gazing out across the waters that I seem to have been sitting here since Time began.

I'm a Crusoe all right. I have the island, I have the hut, I have the fire—yes, and perched upon my thumb I have the pretty Poll. At least I call it a Poll, but it's really a robin—a companionable little gentleman in a faded red waistcoat who hopped into the hut as bold as brass and began pecking the crumbs I had let fall. Nor had I any great difficulty in winning the bird's confidence. I had but to crumble bread on the floor at my feet and thereafter sit perfectly motionless. Then when robin was grown accustomed to my presence and convinced of my harmlessness I began slowly to move my arm and hand towards him with a tempting titbit balanced on the forefinger. And I must confess that my admiration was instantly roused by the bold manner in which the redbreast looked me square in the eye before advancing to the baited finger. It was as though he were putting me on my honour not lightly to trifle with his trust else things would go hard with me.

Here I sit, then, in the midst of my household, monarch of all I survey, and if not entirely lord of the fowl and the brute, still near enough to please me. But unlike Crusoe, unlike the Swiss Family Robinson, unlike Peterkin Gay, Ralph Rover, and Jack Martin, unlike each and all of the inadequate and exasperating castaways of bookdom, from Davie Balfour on Earraid to Melville on Typee, I

do not, in the Enoch Arden manner, bewail the remoteness of the kindly human face Not me For if there is one thing in these desert island tales that gets my back up, it is the hypocritical yearning after the old familiar faces so maudlinly indulged in by the Crusoes That, to me, is the serpent in Paradise, the fly in the ointment, the cucumber in the pickle If these castaways are so enamoured of the masculine mug and the feminine physog as they pretend to be, what the devil are they doing there? They get my goat

But I'm hungry again, so, raking together the fire, I place on top a drumful of river-water Then I wrestle out of my coat-pocket my bulky parcel of tommy In this there is bread and cheese, and pie, and apples, etc , and a raw herring

Without rising from my squatting position I reach up and disentangle from the hut roof a long withe, and, shoving it down the herring's throat and out at the tail, place it horizontally over the fire with each of the two ends stuck through a side of the hut This is my spit And a very effective one, too When one side of the herring is done brown I have merely to twirl the withe between finger and thumb to bring the raw side into place. Heath Robinson could do no better

While the drum is coming to the boil and the herring cooking I toast the bread and cheese and explore my many pockets for the packet of black-and-white which a tramp like me always carries with him This I find just as the water foams to the boil, so in goes the tea, in goes the sugar, and in no time my succulent supper is well under way

Shade of Huck Finn! To be alone on an island, in a hut, before a fire, eating grub which I have cooked myself—lucky me! Life has nothing to show fairer than this idyllic Crusoeing, even although it is

rainy cats and dogs The wind, the wet, and the wildness without serve but to accentuate the comfort within The harder the wind blows the brighter blazes the fire The heavier the rain falls the more glad some am I to be in here out of it The louder the river roars the more thankful I feel that I waded the ford without mishap

But now it darkens Robin has deserted me I am all alone And were it not for the blessed fire which I crouch over so thankfully, and which I so jealously cherish, I should think I was in hell Not the hot hell, the cold hell, the hell of the Gaels Ifrinn, that fabulous island where rains never cease, where the cauldrons never thaw, and no sun shines Bir-r-rr! The very thought sends such a shiver through my bones that I pile more logs on the fire, crouch closer to the flames, and roll a cigarette

Let it rain, let it roar, let it blow Nothing short of earthquakes will dislodge me Nothing short of deluges will put out my fire Let the rain wet me, let the wind chill me, I defy them Here I am planted, here I will remain Roll on, fair weather!

On the morning of the third day the rain ceased, the mists cleared from the river, the sun shone As my supply of tommy was run done, and my tobacco likewise, there was nothing for it but to take the road again Thereupon, knocking down my hut and casting it on the waters, I bade my island home a long farewell, waded across the river, and climbed back a hundred thousand years to civilisation

## LAP THE SIXTH

### TOWARDS NORTH WALES MACHYNLLETH TO BARMOUTH AND HARLECH

Fires in my feet—Mysterious old man—"Mak' yoursel' at hame"  
—The Marshall Mark—Mawddach estuary—Och, sure!—A  
prospect of prospects—My kingdom for a bed!—An agonising  
descent—Exploring a cave—Reaching a barn

THE long rest had practically healed my feet, and my shoes fitted easier, it wasn't long, therefore, before I was passing through the tree-lined, and extremely hospitable, streets of Machynlleth and over the Dovey into Merioneth

But soon the walking so rekindled the fires in my feet that I was forced to cut an ash stave from a wayside wood to use as a third foot, and even then I had to rest every half mile. Consequently it was in the late afternoon that I came into the wonderfully pleasant townlet of Aberdovey, ten miles from Machynlleth

At the foot of gorse-covered hills nestles this clean little watering place peeping across the broad sands of the river estuary, with miles of grassy dunes gracing its seaward side. I came into it whistling *The Bells of Aberdovey*, and when I went out of it, loaded down with nice-tasting nourishment, I struck up *Land of my Fathers* in gratitude for its housewives' openhandedness

Throughout the golden evening that followed I lay happy on the sea-dunes dreaming the hours away. Then in the gusty twilight I wandered along

the solitary beaches toward Towyn until night came and found me bedded in the hay-filled annexe of a cattle shed

In the night I was awakened by the wild wind screaming through the crannies of the place, and the rain-demons battering on the roof. Nor did I afterwards fall asleep. I lay long into the morning till the rain went off before trekking Towynwards. And when I reached that bracing little resort, built near the sea's edge on the levels of the Dysynni marshes, I was just in time to help the inhabitants dispose of their Sunday dinners.

At Towyn the road deserts the sea, bending inland around the Broad Water to the village of Bryn-crug. I hadn't followed this road far before the rain came down again and made walking a misery. Every mile or so I would stop and seek shelter under the hedgerow. And each time I did this there always passed me a mysterious old man, picturesquely clad in a brown ulster and wearing a slouch hat on his grizzled head. And each time I took the road again I would come across him sheltering in turn. It reminded me of the two little figures in a weather-clock when one goes in the other comes out. And this in-and-out business went on for miles, with never a word passing between us, until Bryn-crug was reached, when the mysterious old man disappeared.

The rain and my feet worsened and worsened until no more miserable wretch was abroad than I. At Bryn-crug I halted just long enough to buy a box of matches and to gaze shiveringly up the wild valley-road of Abergynolwyn that skirts the desolate hill bases of Trum Gelli, Taren Hendre, Moel-y-Geifr, and Taren-y-Gesail on its way to the beautiful lake of Tal-y-Llyn and Cader Idris.

Finished gazing, I continued along the rain-scoured highway, and ere long came out through a

bleak pass on to the coast again, where the weathered hills run down into the sea and the road rides athwart their slopes. The wind hurricaned, the rain blustered, the waves tossed in tempest. Had my feet been anyway normal I should have gloried in having to battle my way along such a desert coast in the teeth of the elements. As it was, when a little stone hut showed up on the shore I fervently thanked my stars and lost no time breaking in.

But scarcely were my eyes grown accustomed to the interior gloom than I saw that not only was the hut already occupied, but that the occupant was no other than the mysterious old man in the brown ulster.

When the old bloke saw that he wasn't going to have the hut to himself for the night he vented his annoyance in a single imprecation that did the cockles of my heart good, then philosophically resigned himself to the inevitable.

"Come in, lad," says he, taking a candle-end from under his ulster and placing it lighted on the floor. "Come in and mak' yoursel' at hame. There's room enough for the twa o' us—losh aye! And ye'll find a wheen corn-sacks in the corner yonder, mak' yoursel' a bed o' them. That's it. Now, what hae ye got in the eating, drinking, and smoking line—onnything?"

Happily I did have something in all three lines, so I shared it with him, and in return he treated me to a learned discourse on life in general and vagabond life in particular.

"We tramps are naething mair nor less than sons o' Ishmael," he opined towards the finish, "traiking ower the face o' the earth wi' naewhere ava' to lay our heids; branded wi' the mark o' Cain juist as some tinker-bodies are branded wi' the Marshall Mark."

"The Marshall Mark?" says I, looking fixedly across the candlelight at this modern edition of Edie Ochiltree "What the deuce is the Marshall Mark?"

"Juist what I'm telling ye," answers the gaber-lunzie "The Marshall Mark is the cross on the loof o' a' lineal descendants o' Billy Marshall, ae-time king o' the tinker-gypsies o' Galloway, wha lived to be a hunner and twenty years auld, and had nearly as mony wives as he had years Aye, and King Billy was forbye the last o' the Picts o' that airt Thae Picts, as ye'll maybe ken, were the Reidshanks, the brewers o' heather ale, the painted heathen wha bided in Scotland lang afore ever the Romans cam', and they had a great fondness for earth digging in't, carting it aboot, aye, an' even living in't! Real clarty tinkers they were And whae'er has that cross on his loof is sure to hae the same hankering after caves, lighting fires, tramping strange roads, and suchlike weaknesses, and is a true Pict and a Marshall"

"Bull!" was my not altogether polite criticism of this long-winded discourse

"Bull yoursel!" returns old Edie "It's the gospel I'm telling ye, and no' bull Show me a man wi' a cross on his loof and I'll show ye a Marshall!"

"There!" says I, shooting out both palms for his benefit "There's a couple of loofs with a cross on each of them—and *my* name's Maconachie!"

That fairly scuppered Edie Without so much as a cheep he doused the glim and fell asleep almost instantly And in the morning when I awoke in the golden sunlight it was to find his bed empty and the bird flown

Out I got to the road betimes, and thanked heaven I was alive on such a day Gone were the wind and rain, and in their place burned the sun in a cloudless



sky, while the blue sea lay calm and peaceful after yesterday's tempest And as I hobbled painfully along that barbaric coast I sang for very joy at being let live on such a jolly old Earth as ours is

When at last I reach Henddol, at the mouth of the Mawddach estuary opposite Barmouth, the first thing I see is old Edie standing outside a cottage door with a steaming basin of tea at his lips I say nothing, but just hold out my two palms And Edie? Edie he turns round in a violent pet and lets his back express his contempt of me So I leave him

Hereabouts a footbridge, like the one at Connel Ferry, runs cheek by jowl with the railway bridge spanning the Mawddach estuary This I now trod And in the middle I loitered for a while to feast my eyes on the most romantic spectacle in Taffyland

Between wooded promontory and rocky headland the waters of the Mawddach lie like a blue lagoon at the feet of giant mountains Aloft on the right towers the Cader Idris range, with its composing peaks of Tyrau Mawr, Mynydd Moel, and Pen-y-gader, while in the far background, and sweeping round to Barmouth in an uplifted amphitheatre, are marshalled the airy summits of Aran Mawddwy, Aran Benllyn, Rhobell Fawr, Y-garn, and Llawllech Majestic peak, terrifying cliff and precipice, heather-covered brae, mist-shrouded crag all the varied and wonder-provoking elements of mountain scenery are there above the Mawddach And in fancy one can follow the road alongside the river that penetrates that mighty hinterland by way of Dolgelley and Bala Lake to far-away Corwen and lovely Llangollen

When I reached the Barmouth end of the footbridge the bottom was rudely knocked out of my enchantment, however I found I had been meanly trapped I had to pay a penny toll! And what made this so

obnoxious was the fact that there had been no warning notice at the far side of the bridge. Because in that case, me being a Scotsman, couldn't I easily have walked the fifteen miles round the head of the estuary and saved the penny, eh ? Och, sure !

So outraged were my native economics at this unmanly trick the Barmouth authorities had played on me that I strode unhaltingly through Barmouth with hatred in my heart and desolation in my pocket, vowing retaliations unthinkable in their ferocity.

Between Barmouth and Harlech the road traverses the level district of Ardudwy a narrow tract of green countryside bordered on one hand by the sea and on the other by the mountain ranges of Llawllech and Rhinog. Likewise it is infested with *llans* Llanaber, Llanddwywe, Llanenddwyn, Llanbedr, Llanfair, all these villages I passed through consecutively on my way north to Harlech. But of them I retain only the haziest recollection. My pocket and my feet were too sore to allow of my noticing the landscape. Besides, there was the rain. That had begun just outside of Barmouth and was now teeming down as wholesale as Houndsditch.

It took me nearly all day to walk the twelve miles between Barmouth and Harlech, and when I reached the latter place in the evening I was so done up that I decided to sleep indoors that night. However, just then the weather cleared and I momentarily forgot my done-upness in contemplating the gorgeous panoramic view visible from the rocky hill upon which stand the stark walls of Harlech Castle.

Towered and turreted, and four-square to all the winds, this Edwardian fortress crowns a bold crag high above the sea-marshes of Morfa Harlech, and is conspicuous for miles. From its airy height can be seen across Tremadoc Bay the graceful line of

hills that sweep down out of Snowdonia to form the backbone of the Lleyrn peninsula. Beginning at the holy isle of Bardsey off that promontory's tip, the knowing eye can pick out and name one after another the successive summits running northward. First comes Mynydd Rhiw in Lleyrn, also Carn Fadryn, then, in Carnarvonshire proper, the Rivals, the huddled groups of Bwlch Mawr and Carnedd Goch, next, Moel Hebog, Snowdon the mighty, the Glyders, then Cynicht, the two Moelwyns, the bulky Manods lording it over the Vale of Ffestiniog, and so on ever circling until the eye comes to rest on the mountains behind Harlech itself. Truly, a prospect of prospects.

As I said, when I reached Harlech I was so done up that I decided to sleep indoors that night. But picture my prostration when a policeman assured me that not only was there no kiphouse in Harlech town, but none likewise in the whole of the county of Merioneth!

This blow was a staggerer. It bludgeoned me to a standstill. In the middle of the rain-empty street I stood leaning wild-eyed on my crutch, lifting one foot after another from the ground to ease their pain, in an utter agony both of body and mind. In the name of heaven, where could I go? Surely there was some little dry nook I could go to? But how to find it? How to get there? As it was, I was ready to drop with fatigue, to go further seemed physically impossible.

The flesh must, though, when the spirit drives. So, to my own amazement, I found myself achieving the impossible, leaving Harlech, going out of Harlech!

As I hripled along the road again I felt as one feels in a dream where the dreamer is running with all his might yet moving in excruciatingly slow motion. My desire, as it were, was outrunning my feet. And, time and time again, fuming with impatience, it

had to wait until they made up with it. Then on once more it would hurry with feverish activity, leaving me toiling painfully behind.

A bed, a bed, my kingdom for a bed! That was all my cry. And I could picture minutely what I wanted—a barn with hay in it, a barn with a corrugated iron roof and open on all sides except for the storm-gable. And with that alluring picture dancing before me like a will-o'-the-wisp I laboured heavily along through the rain, dementedly scanning the landscape on all sides in the hope that what was now only a picture would all of a sudden materialise.

All of a sudden it did materialise. For there, away down on my left, plump in the middle of Morfa Harlech—the sea-fens or marshes of Harlech—stood the barn of my desire—full of hay, with a roof of corrugated iron, open on all sides except for the storm-gable!

But—could I reach it? It would take a mighty lot of getting to. I would have to climb down the rocky, precipitous, tree-entangled slope that dropped wickedly from the high mountain-level of the roadway to the low sea-level of the marshes. And even then there would still remain between me and the barn a treacherous half mile of waterlogged fenland. And the farmer might see me. And, oh, heaven, how my agonised feet would suffer!

“Feet be hanged! Farmer be hanged!” my spirit commanded my flesh. “Get down to it quick, and no shunnanegan. Yon’s a bed, and it’s a bed you want, so bite on the agony—but get down to it!” And so, with the fit half of me lashing and abusing the unfit half, I began the breakneck descent of those wicked slopes.

At every step red-hot needles of pain ran mercilessly into my feet. The agony was exquisite. I had to sink my teeth deep into my lip lest I should shriek aloud. And—sometimes I slipped! And then

the hot reeking sweat of my agony seemed to freeze on my quivering flesh, while my jaws clamped fast on the bite of death. But I got there. In spite of the gosh-awful torture of getting there I got there. Not to the barn, understand—half a mile of fen-land still separated us—but to the foot of the slope I got there, I say. Then, but will you believe me? *Then* I deliberately turned in my white-hot tracks and climbed back up again!

Pain, I think, must have momentarily turned my brain. Or perhaps some devil-sent imp of the perverse was having a game with me. Or else it may be that the still-to-be-tackled and dreaded ordeal of negotiating the marshes had something to do with my idiotic jettison of the barn idea. Anyway, whatever the cause, the fact remains that I crawled up back to the road again, and resumed the quest for a bed.

I had not tottered far along the now rapidly darkening road when the black maw of a cave abruptly opened and swallowed me, pained feet and all. But to no purpose. For no matter how deeply I penetrated into its hollow-sounding passages and windings, always did the flickering glimmer of my matches reveal the same wet glistening walls and the rocky pool-filled cavern floor. I couldn't sleep there, that was evident. So, cursing the bootless delay, and dizzy with pain, I staggered my way out and once more resumed the road, as bedless as ever.

Then a mile further on—and what a mile!—another barn swam into my ken. It, too, like the last, stood far in off the road in the middle of a wide sea of marshland. Yes, but there was no slope to descend! I had only the marshes to wade through to make the barn mine. That is, if the farmer didn't see me. For the farmhouse stood dangerously near at hand, with all its windows gaping wide-eyed at

me, as it seemed, and spying on my every movement with maddening and almost human inquisitiveness

I was now desperate, however Hurling all caution to the winds I leapt the wall and began the long splashy knee-deep wade across the marshes And hardly had I progressed a hundred yards when I heard a shout and a barking of dogs behind me But I didn't halt in my headlong career, or even turn my head Farmer or no farmer, trespassing or no trespassing, I would reach that barn although all the farmers and hounds in Wales were howling at my heels !

Then abruptly a wide ditch of shining water appeared right across my line of march And that halted me But only for a moment Retracing my steps a few paces I gathered what was left of myself together, and, agonising though the effort was, broke into a pitiful sort of shamle, leapt out across the ditch—and landed kerplonk in the slimy black rottenness of the far bank

My clothes were in a fearful mess, now From the waist down I was indescribable But no matter, I must reach that barn Though all the mud of Harlech's marshes plastered me from head to heel I must reach that barn ! So, with difficulty withdrawing my legs from the quagmire, I splashed and waded on through the night and the rain—to barge full tilt into a herd of black Welsh cattle !

Thereupon pandemonium broke loose And to this day I do not know however in the world I managed to survive the terrific stampede that followed For at my sudden and all-unlooked-for irruption into its midst that herd of mad beasts exploded with such a bellowing of throats and splashing of hoofs as lifted me completely off my feet, and hurled me stunned and bruised and bleeding back into the quagmire And half an hour later I reached the barn

## LAP THE SEVENTH

THROUGH NORTH WALES HARLECH TO  
LLANDUDNO AND CHESTER

Shelter—A travelling menagerie—Exit Edie—Portmadoc Embankment—Land of the *Leak*?—Pwllheli—At the rainbow's end—In Carnarvon—"Yess, indeed"—Raw Welsh—Llanfairfechan—A white night—Conway Castle—A catastrophe—King of the Castle—By the Sands o' Dee—A weird shadow—Eastward Ho!

NEVER did weary traveller among Arabian sands more thankfully attain the sweet waters and shady coolness of some long-striven-after oasis than did I the warm hay and sheltered cosiness of the barn amid the marshes of Harlech

Once under its iron roof I shed as much of my muddy clobber as was advisable, and hung it where it would have a chance to dry. Then by slow and painful stages I eased off my warped and water-logged feet tormentors, and, after stuffing them with hay, thrust them deep into the stack. Lastly, too tired and too bruised and battered to care about anything on earth except oblivion, I burrowed down beside my terrible shoes and let the sure narcotic of warmth and fatigue drug me to sleep.

In the morning I awoke to find the sun shining in a clear sky. What was more to the point, my clothes and shoes were as dry as could be expected. Accordingly I struggled into those necessary evils and descended from my nest. Then it was that I saw what made me call myself every name outside the saints' calendar. I saw that if I had properly used

my eyes the night before I should have seen that a corduroy road, raised high and dry above the marshes, ran right from the highway to the barn door !

It couldn't be helped, however, it was just the luck of the Toby. Thanking my stars, therefore, that there was indeed a road, I negotiated the marshes dry-shod and was soon hurrying along the main drag, trying to steal a march on my feet, so to speak, before they got their heat up.

The road here runs by the shore of the beautiful arm of the sea called the Traeth Bach, which mirrors in its glassy surface the tall mountains standing about and above it. Not only that, but on either side of the road itself run miles of blackberry bushes. Hence, what between delight at the romantic scenery and relish of the gloriously ripe berries I plucked and ate as I hurried onward, you can imagine that my spirits were as high as they had been low the night previous. But such is the Toby. Light follows dark in the life of a tramp as swiftly and surely as day follows night.

While I'm hasting over the road hereabouts a long string of wild beast vans belonging to Bostock and Wombwell's travelling menagerie pass on ahead of me. At the rear follows an ordinary caravan, and at the rear of that again is towed something that gives me a good laugh. It is a water-barrel slung between two wheels, and, sitting in the mouth of it, with his arms and legs dangling over the side, is no other than old Edie, the gaberlunzieman, asleep with his mouth wide open.

Of course, there is only one thing to do, and I do it. Plucking the biggest and juiciest blackberry I can find, I take careful aim and sling the bramble bang into the snoozer's gub. The effect is immediate, but more involved than I expected. For



although the missile wakens old Edie up all right, yet so galvanic is his wakening that before he can even attempt to save himself, lo and behold! his body doubles up like a knife and down he shoots into the water-barrel

Just at that, though, the vans swing off along the branch road that leads up through the Vale of Ffestiniog, and the last I see of the ulstered gaberlunzieman is a pair of claw-like hands wildly clutching the rim of the barrel, and a dripping head emerging wrathful from the depths

It was in a merry mood, you can imagine, that I turned down the other road which here bends abruptly to the left and crosses on a bridge over the river Dwyryd. And even the fact that this bridge was a toll-bridge, and that I had to stump up a penny to the toll-man, did in no wise put a damper on my spirits. On the contrary, the success of my practical joke, coupled with the superb mountain scenery I was travelling through and the glorious sunshine that was bathing everything in a golden splendour, so mounted to my napper that when I irrupted into the quarry village of Penrhyndeudraeth I was carolling away like a sextet of singing Dervishes

Mooching a good breakfast of ham sandwiches in Penrhyndeudraeth I sauntered on a bit—and ram-stammed into another toll-bar! The sweat broke out on me, but there was no escape. I let myself be mulcted of another bawbee, and began the mile-long crossing of the great Portmadoc Embankment

This embankment, over which runs the railway on the weather side of the carriage-way, acts as a dam to the sea, which used formerly to cover the whole valley of the Glaslyn as far inland as Aberglaslyn, six miles to the north. By this means close on 9,000 acres have been reclaimed, and what

was aforetime a useless island-dotted arm of the sea is now green, bountiful countryside

From the embankment is commanded magnificent mountain scenery In all their unconquered savagery the primeval hills lift to high heaven their rocky heights and wind-swept fells In bewildering gradations of purple and grey and yellow and green, in shades of violet and amethyst, wrapped in mysterious cloud-glooms or in terrifying mist-shrouds, or lit with the red barbaric gleams of sunlight, rise all around and about the North Wallian hills Flanking the green trough of the Traeth Mawr stand the guardian summits of Moel Ddu and the two Moelwyns, while dominating the head of the valley, beyond Beddgelert of doggie fame and the terrific Pass of Glaslyn, tower the grand monarchs of Snowdonia Moel Hebog, Cynicht, Y Wyddfa

After imbibing as many draughts of this heady mountain-brew as was prudent I continued my way along the embankment and shortly arrived in the slate town of Portmadoc, on the Carnarvonshire shore of the Traeth Mawr

By dint of persistent solicitation at back doors I peglegged sufficient tommy to make a respectable dinner of nine or so courses Then finding nothing of interest to detain me longer in the little port I set out along the beautiful road that skirts the steep wooded slopes of Moel-y-gest, and so diligently did I loiter by the way, plucking blackberries, lying dreaming in lush meadows, and what not, that it was early evening ere I had devoured the five miles separating Portmadoc from Criccieth

As all watering places are anathema to me I didn't halt even for a moment in this latter place Merely noting its cleanness, its boied holidaymakers, and its picturesque castle hill, I stalked haughtily through by the shortest route and soon came out

on to the pleasantly uninteresting country that borders this part of Tremadoc Bay

Five uneventful miles later, or about halfway to Pwllheli, the darkness and the rain came down on me unexpectedly, and I had to spend the night under the inadequate shelter of a wayside bush

"Ah, Wales," was my constant thought during that sleepless vigil, "if the vegetarian who first called you the Land of the Leek had been a plumber, he would surely have spelt Leek differently!"

At length morning came and I was glad to exchange the wretched wetness of my ruffer for the wet wretchedness of the road. And, as all the way into Pwllheli the rain drizzled drearily without cease, it was feeling and looking like a drooked crow that I finally debouched into that market town

My drenched condition procured me several dinners, nevertheless. For like the true mendicant I was I traded on it, deliberately exploiting it to soften the hearts and tap the larders of impressionable housewives. And when the rain ceased and the sun broke out about noon I was able to retire among the grassy dunes of South Beach and feast to repletion on the tucker obtained by virtue of this vice

All the sunny afternoon I lay among the dunes watching the running seas and revelling in the deep brilliancy of their colouring. Then at tea-time I arose, and, pursuing enquiries in the town and learning that there was no kiphouse in Pwllheli, I canvassed additional nourishment and took the road

The particular road I took springs up inland from the back streets of Pwllheli to the elevated moorlands that clothe this part of the Llyn. Across the peninsula it then proceeds to wind and undulate until it arrives at the narrow Pass of Llanaelhaiarn at the feet of the Rivals and the hill of Y Gyrnddu

Then bursting through this out on to Carnarvon Bay it turns sharply to the right around a range of quarried hills and hugs the seashore thereafter right on to the town of Carnarvon

As I sped along the stretch of this road that passes over the moors, sudden rain-squalls ever and anon obliterated the sun, then, retreating eastward towards Snowdonia, they gave miraculous birth to most gorgeous single and double rainbows. And as the ends of these shepherds' delights invariably appeared to rest upon the narrow hill-pass towards which I was journeying, I fell to hoping that when at last I reached there I should find awaiting me the crock of gold which is said to lie buried at each rainbow's end

Marvellous to relate, those fanciful hopes of mine did eventually materialise! I did find treasure of a sort. For on the following morning, after I had spent the night on top of a haystack in the midst of the rainbow pass, I happened to knock at a farmer's door, and right there was the treasure forthcoming. Because not only was I given breakfast in galore and luncheon in parcels, but so bucked was the farmer at having a real live Scotsman to confab with that every minute or so he just had to shove coin of the realm into my palm. And when I tore myself away from this human Cornucopia I found myself richer by a bob, two tanners, three wings, and a mark

You are to picture me, then, legging it delightedly out of the Pass of Llanaelhaiarn feeling like a mendicant Danae who had been visited by a shower of gold. For the bob, the two tanners, the three wings, and the mark appeared like unlimited lucre to me. I felt wealthy beyond the dreams of avarice, as though I were crawling with currency, as rich as a Rockefeller, as moneyed as a Midas, as rotten with

rupees as a rajah Nay, I felt as though my attendant genie had furnished me with an *open sesame* to the depositories of Dives, the coffers of Croesus, and the haggled-over hoard of the Hallelujahs !

After issuing from the pass, the name of which shouldn't be allowed, the road bends sharply round a range of quarried hills and hugs the coast thereafter, as I have said, right on to Carnarvon, fourteen miles away This road I now took, journeying gaily onward through the golden morningtide as happy as a sand-boy, and pleasuring alike in the nearness of the sea and the farness of Mona, now visible on the horizon

Arriving at the pretty village of Clynnog some few miles later, I dissipated something of the human Cornucopia's bounty on a packet of gaspers and a poke of lemonade crystals Then quitting the village and commandeering a sequestered nook in a seaward-gazing bower, I there ate eatables, drank drinkables, and smoked smokables until well on in the afternoon After which I again resumed the road, and, taking Glynllifon Park, Llandwrog, and Llanwnda in my devastating stride, was soon crossing over the Seiont into Carnarvon town

Carnarvon stands at the southern entrance to the Menai Straits, which separate Carnarvonshire from the island of Anglesey And though I didn't tarry long there, yet I tarried sufficiently long to fill my eye with the romantic picture which the castle presents mirroring its grey towers and turrets in the placid waters of the river But, as the police were beginning to become prominent features of this same landscape, I levanted back to the road and put my soundest foot forward for Bangor

No more beautiful evening have I journeyed through than that which obtained on this lovely lap of my pilgrimage through the Welsherie In all

the glittering dome of the blue sky not a wisp of cloud was to be seen, and above the dreaming vales and verdant pastures of Mona, across the intervening seaway, the sunset burned golden in the west

On I sauntered through the idyllic eventide, with the shining straits ever paralleling my course and the golden sunlight every growing more and more tarnished as it adventured down into the mists that now swam upon the land. And when finally it sank out of sight altogether, leaving in its wake the diamond-clear dusk of an autumn twilight, I began to look out for somewhere to sleep in. This took some finding. On and on I hurried along the rapidly darkening road, and still that somewhere to sleep in eluded my search. Then star-spangled night came down upon me, and white mist, and glittering frost, though, as the ruddy shield of the harvest moon ere long swung up out of the mist, there was lumination enough to light me on my way.

At last, in a wayside field, I came upon a silent company of corn stooks standing up ghostily in the frosty moonlight. I stopped, I looked, I listened, then over the fence I slithered, and was soon insinuating myself into the narrow wigwam of a stook midmost of the cornfield. And there I passed a night of deep dreamless slumber.

In the bitter dawn I am wakened by a Welsh voice saying, “Yess, indeed, Thomass, it iss a very nice hat. Indeed, yess.” So out I crawl from my wigwam to behold a brace of yokels standing nearby admiring my cadie, which had dropped from my head during the night. They look at me as though I’m a ghost, but when I wish them good-morning they recover and begin bidding for the hat. But I tell them there’s nothing doing in the auction line, and that if they call that hat a nice hat then all I can say is that they know as much about hats as I

do about Clyde navigation And I leave them and hit the main drag

Down the old Bangor road I trudged, and in due course passed the two famous bridges that hereabouts span the Menai Straits the Britannia Tubular Bridge and the Menai Suspension Bridge The latter is a beautiful structure elevated high above the silver seaway, and the only thing ugly about it is the toll you must pay before you are allowed to cross

Nearby, in Anglesey, is a village which has earned world-wide notoriety what of its lengthy name Did I say *name*? I mean circumlocutory entitlement, only such a polysyllabic synonym can adequately designate that by which the village in question is distinguished from other villages Well, this circumlocutory entitlement consists of no less than fifty-eight letters, and is rumoured to be capable of being got off one's chest in no more than nineteen syllables One doesn't say it, one sings it Translated into English it looks formidable enough Church - of - St Mary - in - a - hollow - of - white hazel - adjacent - to - a - rapid - whirlpool - and - to - St Tysilio's-Church-near-a-red-cave But in raw Welsh it is perfectly devastating Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllllandysilhogogoch!

I arrived at the university and cathedral town of Bangor just as its hundreds of chimneys were sending their creamy columns of breakfast smoke up through the still air Hence I had no trouble in accumulating sufficient varieties of suitable viands to help me nourish myself And when I sauntered forth on the road again it was with a grateful glow in my heart and a pleasant fullness at my waistline that I ran my eye over the undeniable scenic beauties of the town

Bangor stands at the northern entrance to the Menai Straits Behind it rises a picturesque range of hills, while in front, across the Lavan Sands, and

across the shining levels of the bay, lies the flat expanse of Anglesey Mona, Mother of Wales, with its green meadows, white cottages, and lazily turning windmills. Then as the eye travels northward it takes in Beaumaris, the capital of Mona, and, proceeding seaward to Puffin Island and thence over Conway Bay, picks up Great Orme's Head looming beyond.

Bidding Bangor farewell, I took the road that leads through the inland villages of Llandegai and Aber to Llanfairfechan by the sea, some eight or nine miles distant. It was an uneventful road, though, and dusty, and travelling over it in the broiling heat proved anything but pleasurable. Still, between Aber and Llanfairfechan I had for company a vagabond Scot and his wife, to say nothing of their perambulatorful of family troubles, whose chat and backchat so interested and diverted me that the baking miles burned under my boot-soles unfelt.

The coast resort of Llanfairfechan is a bright little place, in spite of the dirty, big humplock of rock above it called Penmaenmawr, which even on the sunniest day does its direst to cast a gloom over everything. Nevertheless there's a quietness, a far-from-the-madding-crowd atmosphere, about it that appeals.

When I arrive there it's the dinner hour, so I set about my mumper's business instant. Nor am I unsuccessful. I prospect for gold, pardners, and, believe me, the pay-dirt shows up like butter in the pan. For as soon as I dekk the long row of hotels and boarding-houses on the promenade, I make for them—more by intuition than by the tradesmen's entrances—and in nearly every case get in the half-nelson on the kitchen staff. Then I retire like King Canute beside the sad sea waves and eat my earnings to the local band playing.



At tea-time I arose and dawdled out of Llanfairfechan by the road hewn in the steep face of Penmaenmawr, high above the sea. And no sooner had I rounded that promontory than I found myself looking down into the streets of the town of Penmaenmawr. But except for three cups of tea and four parcels of cake, not to mention the poisonous looks of sundry policemen, I cannot with any truth record that Penmaenmawr gave me anything.

Between Penmaenmawr and Conway, five miles to the north, the road runs by the seashore. Accordingly I took my time going along it, having decided to pass through the latter holiday town in the dark, and to sleep somewhere between it and Llandudno that night. Unfortunately, just as I reached the outskirts of Conway the rain began to come down in Welsh quantities, and I was obliged to abandon my plan and seek refuge in a tumbledown hut which stood in the middle of a wide tract of waste land at the mouth of the Conway estuary.

The night that followed was truly a white one. For although the hut afforded ample shelter, and although the rain stopped after a while, yet when the moon rose it brought with it a bitter frost that rendered sleep not only impracticable but also highly dangerous. Consequently it was a much frozen and bleary-eyed effigy of a tramp that slunk out of that hut next morning and shivered along round the base of Conway Mountain into Conway town.

Conway is a walled town. Also, it has a castle. But this castle is so miraculously preserved, so romantically situated, so picturesquely towered, turreted, and battlemented, and so ridiculously like a pretty-pretty castle in a pretty-pretty picture book, that although I beheld it with my own eyes and slapped its walls with my own hands, yet I refused to believe it. Instead of contemplating it

with the rapt admiration it doubtless deserves, I turned my back on it as on some unsubstantial fabric of a dream, and went scouting around on the grub-trail

I scouted to some purpose, too. Predestined fate led me to a house where the occupants, having reached the end of their holiday, were packing up to go home, and as there still remained in the larder some victuals which they didn't desire the landlady to inherit, I not only fell heir to the whole caboodle but likewise acquired a big jug of coffee with which to wash it down.

Thus fortified I wasn't slow to shake the dust of Conway from off my daisies. Crossing the suspension bridge over the river in such a manner as to evade paying a possible toll—for I witnessed some cyclists being mercilessly mulcted by what looked like a toll-ghoul—I cast a final sceptical look at the ridiculous castle and began the five-mile walk across the neck of the Creuddyn peninsula to Llandudno.

As the sun was now shining gloriously in a deep blue sky, and a cooling breeze wafting from the west, that little walk proved exceedingly pleasant. Just the same, I consumed all forenoon a-getting to Llandudno. Halfway across the isthmus I was accosted tearfully by a wee fella whose barrow had shed a wheel, and who besought me to fix it for him. Consequently when I finally descended upon the Naples of the North—see publicity folders—everybody was indoors having dinner.

I didn't care, however. Hurrying along the esplanade which follows the graceful curve of Orme's Bay between Great and Little Orme's Heads for two miles, I bought a bottle of lemonade in a booth at the foot of the latter hill and climbed up there to demolish what remained of the Conway victuals.

But when I descend an hour or so later with the empty bottle the world grows dark before my peepers and the sky falls And why? Because the robber in the booth tells me callously to my face, without appearing to care what anguish might result, that no pennies are returned on them sort o' bottles!

I think it was this catastrophe more than anything else that was the root-cause of my finding little of enjoyment journeying along the pleasure-coast of Wales With that penny I seemed also to have lost my enthusiasm for things Welsh, and from then on I lived only for the English border

From Llandudno I travelled through golden weather to Rhos-on-Sea and the two Colwyns Trams forever jangled alongside of me, motors forever blared, and what with shrieking villas in the modern style and howling bungalows in the futurist, it wasn't long before I was completely cakey, doolally, or what you will

When the maddening tram-lines petered out at last I found myself tramping in a purple twilight along the road leading to Abergele Presently the defile of Cefn-yr-Ogof hove in sight, and as I passed through it I bethought me that there was the bloodiest ground in the whole of the Principality Saxon, Norman, English, and Welsh had all fought and shed their blood there in the long ago And if that blood had tongue, thought I, what a fearful babel of cries would forever clamour in that red defile!

Hereabouts the ornate wall of Gwrych Castle parallels the road for a good distance And as I walk along in the twilight I come upon a bloke squatting in a doorway of that wall It is Saturday night, and he's drunk, and as he squats he waves a bundle of banknotes over his head, and tells the world—

" Ah come frae Invergorden, Ah do This money's mine, this land's mine, and Ah'm the King o' the Castle ! "

" Jock ! " says I, halting abruptly and turning faint at the sight of so much legal tender , " It's a funny Scotsman that shows everybody his pay-poke, isn't it ? Better get up and go inside afore somebody takes it off you " And I wipe the sweat of self-control from my face

" Guidsake, what's this ! " roars the drunk, springing to his feet and ramming his wad into his pouch " Guidsake, anither Scotsman ! Guid-sake, he's richt ! " And in he jumps and bangs the door behind him, locking it and double-locking it in panic frenzy

On I went through the darkness and eventually came into the little market town of Abergele Happily, a convenient barn loomed up by the way-side just outside the town, so in I climbed and enjoyed a night of deep and undisturbed sleep

Next morning I retraced my steps into Abergele and collected various breakfasts before resuming my way The day that followed was one of the pleasantest, sunniest Sabbaths I ever encountered on the Toby Mile after mile flowed under my tireless feet, and the long straight stretches of road that are a feature of these parts acted on me like an opiate I drifted along in a sort of trance, which the fairy music of the wind in the telegraph wires helped greatly to sustain

At Rhuddlan an aged cottager treated me to a slap-up Sunday dinner, capping it gloriously with a tumblerful of cider , and afterwards I sat contemplating Rhuddlan Castle, which, as it stands with its heavily ivied walls and massive round towers on the banks of the river Clwyd, constitutes a picture that artists delight to put more or less on canvas

Then I rose up and sauntered into the holiday town of Rhyl

Here among the dunes I lounged all afternoon, watching the holidaymakers boring themselves to death. But as soon as I felt I was becoming as bored as they I shook the sand out of my clobber and mooned along four uneventful miles into uninteresting Prestatyn

From thereabouts onward the road runs straight as any road can run over the level countryside bordering the sandy wastes of the Dee estuary. And as I journeyed through the growing dusk I fell to halting every mile or so to hearken to the weary wind that blew in across the desolate sands. But 'twas always in vain. Never once did I hear anything that could be considered as even remotely suggesting someone, least of all Mary, calling the cattle home, and calling the cattle home, across the Sands o' Dee!

That night I experienced some difficulty in securing harbourage. I had to walk for miles through almost total darkness ere I stumbled upon a place. And even then I had to take Hobson's choice. I was forced to kip out just off the road in a planting of young trees that afforded neither shelter nor anything else. But as I could lie down more or less comfortably I considered myself not ill served.

I got my boots off, lighted a cigarette, and sat watching the belated moon rising. Then it was that there happened something which I hesitate to record lest I be accused of drawing the long bow. However, as neither belief nor disbelief can alter facts, I shall tell exactly what that something was, and leave you to it.

As I sat there within the planting meditating on my adventures in Taffyland I gradually became

aware of a dead-black shadow moving towards me over the moonlit road. It was no ordinary shadow, understand, for besides motion it possessed length and breadth and *thickness*. And as I sat there in the planting I wondered what the deuce it could be. But not for long, because when the shadow drew abreast of me I saw to my amazement that it was no shadow, but a compact body of men padding silently along the road!

As soundless as ghosts they walked in the thick white dust at the roadside, and as they passed on round the bend out of eyeshot I had just time to note that each man was armed with a cudgel, and had his face blackened.

Although the witnessing of this hair-raising apparition in so lonely a place at so late an hour was disconcerting enough, yet its sequel, which occurred next morning in the bright light of day, was a thousand times more so. For, believe me or believe me not, when I came to scrutinise the stretch of road over which that weird night-company had padded in the thick dust, I discovered not the slightest trace of even a single footprint.

That day saw the completion of my Welsh odyssey. Rapidly passing through the industrial towns of Mostyn and Flint I crossed over the Dee at Queen's Ferry in the early afternoon, and was in Chester by tea-time.

Thus it came about that, just as I had stood on Worcestershire Beacon a month previously and 500 miles removed, so did I stand on Chester's walls the following evening wondering where on the map I could go next, and looking back along the road I had travelled.

West it went into the sunset, neck and neck with the Dee—a good road, a long road, a road of many

memories, but a road that would know me no more For I had done with Wales, I had finished with the west, England lay before me—Eastward Ho ! was my cry

So, bidding Chester adieu and climbing down from its walls, I struck east through the twilight and set foot on the first lap of the road that runs across England to blue water

## LAP THE LAST

ACROSS ENGLAND CHESTER TO HULL  
AND LONDON

Rural Byng Boys—Dick Turpin—stuff—Tramp—Royal II—Mean  
Manchester—Over Marsden Moor—Funereal dawn—The  
Golden Road—In a stackyard—England's Holland—  
Paradise regained—On the wolds—Into the Big Smoke

BEFORE I had gone a mile I fell in with adventure in the form of a policeman leaning half-out of a window in a wayside nick, calling to me to halt as he wanted to talk with me

'Twas ever thus These rural Byng Boys (they were Byng Boys *then*, you know) were always wanting to talk with me They seemed to find me of absorbing interest No matter where I went, no matter what roundabout or solitary road I took, always would I run up against some turnip-treading yokel in blue desirous of a heart-to-heart talk with me There was no gainsaying them, either Despite the fact that they were all perfect strangers to me, up they would come and demand to know all about me, as bold as bandits This was a fair specimen

"Halt!" he shouts, jumping through the window and striding across to me "What's your name, age, and place of abode? Where have you come from? Where are you bound? What's in your pockets?"

"Why?" I asked, using the monosyllable that has always the triple effect of making cops wild, apologetic, then civil

"Why?" repeated the policeman, becoming



wild, apologetic, then civil, "Well, you see, there's been a series of robberies in the Hoole district, and we've received orders to keep a sharp eye on the roads for suspicious characters Turn out your pockets"

Cool, eh? Wouldn't any honest citizen wax righteously indignant at such Dick Turpin stuff from a licensed hold-up man on the King's highway? Yes, but tramps are not honest citizens, therefore their feelings are violated with impunity It would be a criminal offence for them to wax righteously indignant

However, I turned out my pockets as meek as any Chinaman, and soon satisfied Nosey Parker that theirs was no silver lining Then I told him a tale which he could find no fault with (I had spun it too often for that), and so, much against his will, he had to let me go

By this it was dark night, so I began looking out for a ruffer, which, fortunately, I wasn't long in finding Coming upon a hoarding from which a poster was peeling off, I tore down a huge piece as stiff as a board, dragged it into a field, made a tent of it, and crawled in to a night's undisturbed rest

Next day was torrid The heat made walking anything but pleasurable In passing through Frodsham village, besides threepence in coppers, I collected some bread and cheese and apple pudding along with a welcome neckful of lemonade Then, after a toilsome walk through uninteresting country, I entered the town of Warrington somewhere about noon

There I discovered a place that should be in every town A soup-kitchen it was, for down-and-outs, called, if my diary doesn't lie, *Gaskell's Bakehouse* And the cheapness and goodness of the tommy therein was an eye-opener But, alas! as I possessed

only threepence, all I could buy was a twopenny bowl of camphor-and-moth and a penny mug of you-and-me. Still, so generous was the quantity of each that they made a satisfying meal by themselves.

Just before passing through the long town of Irlam, whom think ye that I met? My double! My twin, my very spit and living image!

As you can well imagine, so gruesome an encounter fairly deflated me, as it did the other bloke. We could only gaze at each other in rueful amaze.

"Geewillikins!" thought I to myself, "One Tramp-Royal is insufferable enough—ask Glasgow editors—but *two*!"

Aloud I said, "Did you also think to make a living by writing verse, chum?"

And my other self answered, "Judge for yourself, mate," and pirouetted on his heel to show off his rags.

"Ah, yes," says I, "You also are a typical rhymster. What workhouse have you come from?"

He had come from a Manchester workhouse, he said, and was now heading towards Liverpool with pier-head jumps in view. All his story he told, omitting his name, naturally, and it was humbling to sit there by the roadside listening to my double characteristically boosting himself. Though the likeness wasn't so damning at second as at first sight, yet it was unmistakably there. Only, instead of rimless eyeglasses, my spit sported a pair of horn-rim goggle atrocities. But that, with a few unimportant details in attire, was the only real difference. In everything else, from sore feet to unshaven chin, he was my mate and marrow, curse him.

For a long time we sat confabbing by the roadside, then we parted, with mutual relief. And after I had accepted some supper at a cottage I climbed

into a barn and had a good night's sleep. But in the morning early, before I was properly awake, the farmer chanced to climb up and find me among his corn. Whereupon, swearing mightily, he yanked me out of my cosy little nest and let me drop twelve feet to the ground below. Whereat, thanking him for a pleasant night's lodging (which impertinent politeness made him gibber) I picked myself up unhurt, and shambled forth into Manchester.

Big as that city is, though, I begged assiduously all day in it and failed to earn the price of even an eightpenny kip. So when I had blued the day's takings, sixpence, on a much needed meal, I sat sleeping in the Piccadilly Free Library until closing time, preparatory to ditching the place.

Thereafter, following the weary tram-lines, I trudged on and on, and up and up, until midnight found me on the other side of Oldham lying grumbling in a field. Then I slept. And when morning came I saw that I was among desert hills and that my road lay over the tops of these. So I huffily began to climb. But I didn't remain long in the huff. For at the first lonely house I visited the folk gave me a jugful of hot tea and a huge chunk of succulent tart. Then a motor-lorry came toiling up the steep road behind me, and I boarded it unbeknown to the driver. No! was I the only undesirable stealing a ride thereon. Two other Tobymen were also there, dangling their disreputable legs over the back and puffing like noblemen at woodbines.

On and on rumbled the lorry, mile after mile, through one of the dreariest wildernesses I have ever known. Marsden Moor. Bare, bleak, stony hills rise on either hand, and of colour there is not a note. As one of my pals remarked, driving through it was like driving through Hell's slag-heaps on a

nightmare And we thanked whatever gods may be that we were riding and not padding the hoof across such wastelands

At Marsden my companions dropped off, leaving me to continue alone right on to Huddersfield, where I, too, quit the lorry (which was Leeds bound), and began the long trudge into Wakefield

I reached there after dark, and spent a most horrible night trying to sleep in an old abandoned shack that was hotching with dirty big rats Then all next day, which was Saturday, I worked that town of Wakefield as probably it had never been worked before, but collected only sufficient money to buy a cup of tea and a packet of gaspers And towards evening I turned my back on the hard-up Yorkies and headed eastward once more

Midnight found me on the worst side of Pontefract looking for the usual place to doss in But this time I struck it lucky Climbing through the open window of a wooden shanty near a house I found within a big long box resting on trestles, and a lot of wood shavings lying about the floor Whereupon, filling the box with the shavings, I made for myself a comfortable bed into which I was not long in climbing And all that night I slept soundly, not waking once, despite the fact of the box being so tight a fit that I couldn't lie with my knees up

And no wonder it was so tight a fit When dawn came and I sat up to take stock of my surroundings, can you guess where I found myself? I found myself inside an undertaker's workshop, sitting up in a coffin, with open coffins standing on end all around!

The day that followed such a funereal dawn proved a most beautiful one The sun shone, the countryside rose to the occasion, and the wayside hedges hung so thick with blackberries that my progress was thereby seriously retarded I covered a good

distance notwithstanding, and near the village of Knottingly I came upon an old acquaintance lying right athwart my path the Great North Road, over which I had travelled on my tramps from Dover to Aberdeen and from Aberdeen to London, years ago It brought a rush of mind to the brain

Finally, that night I slept in a windy barn outside of Goole on the Humber, and the next day saw me speeding towards Hull on the last lap of my cross-England journey, as jubilant at sight of the sea as Xenophon's Ten Thousand, or as that buccaneering horde who, with Harry Morgan, swooped on Panama.

Hull proving a hungry town, however, I retraced my steps to Goole, crossed the Humber on the ferry, then, by way of Snaith, Hatfield, Blaxton, Funningly, and Bawtry, arrived at the beginning of what I have christened my Golden Road

If the Golden Road to Samarkand was as golden as the one I'm now speaking of, then it must have indeed been golden For this of mine traversed seven counties of England Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Cambridgeshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex, and there was not a cloud or a raindrop in the whole of its length

I had not experienced weather like it before, except, maybe, in the West Country It was wonderful Imagine a whole month of golden, burning days, of soft, ethereal twilights, of honey-dripping moons, and of velvety midnights spangled with stars Imagine—but here, come with me, come with old Khayyam, and together we'll wander down my Golden Road

It began just halfway between the village of Bawtry and the town of Gainsborough And I first realised its golden possibilities from the heart of a corn-stook For I had slept there all night, and although it proved as tight a fit as the coffin, and a

trifle draughty, yet I awoke in the cool September morn feeling as refreshed as I don't know what. But I didn't get out of bed too quickly. Instead, I lay flat on my back in an ecstasy of slothfulness, gazing up through the straws to the lovely blue of the autumn sky and listening to the swallows twittering. Then suddenly the sun rose, and lo! the stook caught its gold and changed on the instant to a golden arbour.

It was the Golden Touch! And from that moment, over hundreds of miles and through seven counties, as I have said, it followed in my every footstep. Golden was the sun, the moon was golden, and the road ran golden through the golden weather.

Even my luck as a tramp was golden. For on the long, long road between Lincoln and Sleaford a woman beckoned me to her cottage door to give me half a cooked chicken and a knuckle of ham. Further, I had hardly finished thanking her when a passing motorist stopped his car and requested me to climb aboard. Which I did. And at the end of a fifteen-mile rip-roaring ride through the golden autumn-land, the owner-driver (an Aberdonian, be it noted!) emptied his tobacco pouch into my hands, and before I could say "Haud on!" had topped it with half a crown and vanished into the sunset.

In the thick, syrup-like, honey-coloured mist of twilight I stole into a stackyard and went noseying around looking for a corner to sleep in. And I found one. But it was far more than a mere corner. It was a veritable tunnel running away into the warm heart of the most enormous stack I had yet seen.

In I crawled, and crawled, and further crawled, but as the tunnel seemed to be forever without end I halted at last, pulled off my boots, and wired into the chicken and the knuckle of ham as only a tramp

knows how to wire in Then I stuffed the old jimmy-pipe full of the Aberdonian's fragrant tobacco, crawled my way out again, and sat at the mouth of the tunnel smoking in the starlight For it was just such a night as Stevenson loved a wonderful clear nights of stars, indeed it was And far up in the zenith, arching gigantically down to both horizons, shimmered the mighty wonder of the Milky Way Then the moon rose to glitter icily on a frosty world, whereat I knocked my pipe out, took a last long look at the hosts of heaven, and crawled happily in to the land of dreams

The next day, and for several days, I was walking through that strange un-English countryside by the Wash, called Holland Flat it is—so very, very flat—and there I saw windmills, and salt marshes, and canals, and dykes, and sea-walls everything, in fact, as in the Dutch Holland oversea Swineshead, Wigtoft, Fossdyke, Holbeach, Long Sutton, and Sutton Bridge, I passed through all And when I wanted a drink of water I had to knock at doors For there are few, if any, streams in that level land, salt dykes and ditches predominating And even the very pump-water itself is well-nigh undrinkable, so salty is its taste

Often and often, with my tongue swollen big with thirst, did I rush to a piece of water, like a desert traveller to a miraged oasis, only to find it the inevitable brine In fact, I believe I should have gone completely off my rocker had it not been for the immense apple orchards that often ran for miles along the road These saved me !

On through the golden weather I journeyed, ever southward, skirting the Wash and the Cambridge-shire fens, and by easy stages came at last into Norfolk And ever the sun shone, never rain fell, and the road ran golden all the way

When passing through King's Lynn in the burning sunlight I saw a woman tramp who, literally, had economy on the brain. The hat she was wearing was all carefully wrapped up in brown paper!

Castle Rising, Sandringham, Hunstanton, Holme-next-the-Sea, and Wells-next-the-Sea—my golden, gaudy road ran ever onward. Food was abundant, folk were kind, and the wayside hedges hung black with brambles. And as I wandered slowly along through the golden heats of the autumnal noons I ate and ate to my soul's content. The blackberries dangled so temptingly, so like miniature bunches of black grapes, so big, so bright, so full, so bursting with luscious, juicy sweetness, that the old Adam in me awoke and I revelled like a god in a Paradise regained.

Then on the road between Stiffkey and Blakeney I fell in with romance in the shape of beagles. And what a glorious spot of colour the bright, laughing, pulsating scarlet of the huntsman made against the good brown earth and the russet trees! I watched and followed the questing pack for hours, delightful hours, fording bright streams, topping green hills, and breasting sweet grass across humming meadows. I shall never forget it—though I'm hanged if I know what the bandy-legged dogs and the excited horsemen were looking for!

Then on again by the sea, taking Sheringham, Cromer, and Mundesley in my stride, and so to Happisburgh and quaint little Palling in the sands, where were tiny tarry cabins of retired sailormen, and occasional hulls turned turtle to do duty as homesteads. And here the coast reminded me of Machrihanish, and I lay aloft between the sun and the sand on the breezy dunes counting the many craft that sullied the sea-rim, and longing to visit dolphin coral in deep seas.



Here, too, the road is delightfully sequestered. Far from the madding crowd it runs, bending right-angled with bewildering frequency and occasionally petering out in sand dunes. It is not the main road, that lies further inland, so the houses are few and far between. And no tramp, it seemed, had been there before, so I skimmed the cream of the milk of local kindness. Indeed, so very openhanded were the country folk that, in the interests of health, I was forced to limit myself to a bare five meals a day.

From Palling I deviated inland to loiter a while by the broads. Hickling Broad, Martham Broad, and Rollesby Broad, then I took the sea-road again through Yarmouth and Lowestoft, passing into Suffolk.

Here on the wolds below Southwold I spent a most romantic night in a heather hut. You see, twilight found me in the heart of the rolling heather-land, so, as inevitably happens in such cases, necessity became the mother of invention. And I gathered great armfuls of heather and bracken which some clearer of the wilderness had cut and piled into stooks, and with these I erected a sort of hut in the lee of a stunted larch. It consisted of three rude walls with a roof of newspapers, but served wonderfully well to keep off the remarkably heavy dew that fell that night. And in the doorway I lighted a fire of heather, and sat in its glow cosy and comfortable, smoking the butt of a cigar and admiring the golden sickle of frosty moon that slowly swung clear of the sea-mist.

But, as even the longest lane has a turning sometime, so likewise had my Golden Road an ending. Moreover it was like to have been a tragic ending. For on the road between Colchester and Clacton-on-Sea, in Essex, near the hamlet of Thorington, I

came within an ace of being shot dead in my sleep

It happened early on a Sunday morning as I lay in a hedgebottom And so still did I lie, and so completely covered was I with my old black coat, that I must have looked remarkably like a boulder For suddenly I felt alight on top of me the slight weight and furry warmth of a rabbit But I didn't shake it off, it had as much right to perch on me as I had to lie upon the ground So I lay stone-still, and was in the act of breathing through the coat, "We be of one blood, thou and I," when—bang! bang! went a gun, and I sprang to my feet, galvanised into action

And do you know what I saw? I saw before me a man standing knee-deep in mist with a smoking gun in his hands, and, at my feet, pathetically twitching, my little blood-brother welling his heart away

That same morning the gold faded from everything, and rain fell, and my Golden Road became but a memory a memory, however, that was to hearten and sustain me all the way through Essex, by way of Witham, Chelmsford, and Romford, and so at last into London, into the Big Smoke, into Sodom-on-the-Subway, Gomorrah-on-the-Metropolitan

## THE CIRCUS OF SODOM

*Saw you the lights with their glitter and glow,  
And their garish, alluring array ?  
Saw you the sights in the gloom below,  
In the Circus of London's Gay ?*

I saw the lights and the colours they took,  
Emerald, scarlet, and flame,  
But they blinded my eyes that I scarce could look,  
In the Circus, at London's Shame

*Saw you the gold and the diamonds bright,  
The wealth, and the lavish display ?  
Saw you the creatures that wanton by night  
In the Circus of London's Gay ?*

I saw how the gold and the diamonds shone  
On the throats and the breasts of the fair ,  
The tinsel and glitter that tarnish the dawn  
In the Circus of London's Despair

*Painted and daubed, in their baubles and bells,  
The fools, did you see them bedight ?  
Think you they reckon of their ultimate hells,  
In the Circus of London's Delight ?*

The fools, I beheld them, woman and man,  
Reckless of aught on the morrow ,  
Garbed in their folly they footed the tan  
In the Circus of London's Sorrow

## THE CIRCUS OF SODOM

*Saw you the beggars so ragged and grim,  
How they tremble, and cower, and wince,  
With their cupful of bitterness filled to the brim,  
In the Circus of Pauper and Prince ?*

With tears I beheld then bewildering band,  
And each had a curse on his face,  
In this, the heart of a Christian land  
The Circus of London's Disgrace !

(Written on the Embankment  
between 1 and 2 A M 17/1/23)



If the tramp's chief worry were not a shortness of bread, life on the Toby would just be one long loaf after another

It is a continual conjugation of the verb *to loaf* in all its moods, tenses, and grammatical proclivities, most active when running the gamut of grub, and passive mostly when running the gauntlet of graft

It is life worked out to the third decimal place, or, if you like it better, life reduced to its logical absurdity to eat to live to eat. It is the idyllic existence of idealistic idleonians, and complex simplicity is its keynote. It is a musical scale dotted over with sharps, flats, and naturals—city sharps, town flats, and village naturals. And lastly, it is a stave of five lines—the white line, the skyline, the food line, the bed line, and the masculine

By the Toby you are to understand the world of the tramp, the panhandler, and the peglegger. The word itself, philologically speaking, is old cant for *road*. At the base period of its coming it stood for stand and deliver, highwaymen, men with low ways, pistols for two, and Tyburn for the tree. But Time, the demon barber, has given it a convict's crop. To-day the Toby stands for run into cover, A A men, men with no pays, spanners for two, and petrol fumes and a lot of backchat for the injured.

But if that is for what the Toby stands, the Tobyman or tramp has got to stand a great deal

more He has to put up with the barbed-wired and concrete-kerbed atrocities that are the new arterial roads He has to take his life in his hands and watch out for his feet when treading the mazes of modern loopways and bypasses He has to suffer dumbly the suspicious-eyed scrutiny of scorching road scouts, patronising patrolmen, and bucolic bobbies, besides the attentions of other insects like the maddening midge, the clinging cleg, and the turnip-treading clodhopper

Your *bona-fide* Tobyman is distinguished by his gait, likewise by his boots shall you know him He carries always three things on his back a peter, a drum, and a parasitical population The peter is the poke wherein he keeps his swag, which is the impedimenta of pedestrianism The drum is the tea-can, most indispensable item of his tea-making apparatus And as for the parasitical population (the incubus of his own incubating)—do you remember the story of the king who sought far and wide for the shirt of a happy man? Well, it oughtn't to have ended merely by telling how the one discoverable happy man—a tramp—was found to have no shirt It ought to have gone on and told that the absence of that tramp's shirt was the explanation of that tramp's happiness!

The Toby furnishes the tramp with everything he lacks It is a miraculous larder that never empties, a Fortunatus' purse that is never bankrupt Bounty flows from it, as from a horn of plenty, in an exhaustless stream, free for all, and with never a catch in it

The reason why the tramp is always walking on is because of his absolute belief in the crock of gold at the rainbow's end In other words, he believes that if he walks long enough and far enough he will at last come upon a big, bulgy, unwieldy wallet

lying all unclaimed on the crown of the road where some motoring millionaire has let it drop. The bigness, bulginess, and unwieldiness of the wallet, it is understood, being the exterior proof of the interior oof. The tramp, I repeat, believes this, which is why he can never properly describe the kind of country he passes through. He does not look at the country. What he looks at is the road, the whole road, and nothing but the road. And is it this wallet of his belief he is looking for? Yes! And are his plans all cut and dried? Certainly! And does he know precisely what he will do on the advent of the windfall? Absolutely! Will he at once carry the wallet, unopened and in no way interfered with, to the nearest police station and hand it over to the station sergeant with his name and address so that the grateful owner, when found, will maybe reward him for his deserving honesty, purity of character, and sublime abnegation of self? You bet your sweet life he will—*not!*

Although the tramp may not be possessed of too much money, still he does see life. He sometimes lives through more in a day than many ordinary men live through in a lifetime.

I remember, for instance, before breakfast on a quiet Sunday morning in Essex, experiencing so many escapes from sudden death in a single half hour as would have made Russia's Red Sunday look like a blue Monday in comparison.

As I said, it all happened before breakfast, about the time when the late-lying urbanite has gouged the sleep from his eyes and ordered the wife to slip down and fetch the Sunday papers up from the mat. To start with, I was most murderously awakened from my doss in a hedgebottom—as I have related elsewhere—by a fool farmer with a gun shooting at a rabbit which had hopped on top of me.



Then, five minutes later, when I had accepted blood-money and taken to the road, a huge yellow hound sprang out through a gate with my inoffensive throat as its objective. And just as I had warded it off, and while it still hung in the air wonderingly, up hurtled a second hound in goggles and a motor-bike, knocked his canine equivalent into eternity, ran into a wall, described a parabola through the Sabbath morning, and landed with pain and precipitancy in the heart of a wait-a-bit bush.

Then, five minutes later, when I had stopped running, I came face to face with the same policeman to whom on the previous night I had proffered some astonishing excuses when he encountered me withdrawing, bulgy about the belt, from a wayside orchard. Life on the Toby, however, accelerates a tramp's wits and keeps him at all times up to snuff. So before Boy Blue could lash his brain into the state of thought necessary to his attacking me with questions, I commenced running again, and shouted back

"Quick! There's a dead body up the road there. A motorist killed it. Hurry! He's waiting to give you his number and full particulars about himself."

"Hi, you!" called the cop after me, "where are you running to? It's my duty to arrest you for last night, you know. I saw the orchard. Come back."

"Not now," I panted, running harder, "I'm going to 'phone an ambulance at the first A A box. You can arrest me when I come back, can't you, officer?"

Boy Blue pondered deeply.

"So I can," he cried. "I never thought of that. But don't be long!" And so we parted for good.

Then, five minutes later, a motor-lorry came thundering up behind me with a tempting trailer in tow. Here was a lift, thought I, and in a running leap gripped the back of it, muscled myself up, swung

round to sit down—and went hurtling through what should have been a solid bottom on to the hard, hard road

Then, five minutes later, as I was coming to myself, three motor-cars all abreast, and each trying its wickedest to pass the others, came rip-roaring right on top of me (Only tramps know what motorists are capable of on lonely roads) And if I hadn't rolled rapidly over into the ditch I should have constituted yet another speed trophy for Britain

Speaking of being ditched reminds me that the world of the Toby is, in general, a womanless world. The tramp, but only from necessity be it understood, comes in contact with the parasitical sex only at back doors. But from the many occasions when able-bodied housewives have forced him to listen to rude words and disagreeable expressions, and from the newspapers which he has picked up and perused with astonished mind in quiet hedge-bottoms, he has the entire characteristics of the female ticked off and docketed for self-defence on future occasions

He will inform you that women are mentally and fundamentally corrupt, full of artifice and fraud from the cradle to the altar, and a continual source of disturbance thereafter to the men who have been inveigled into marrying them. He will tell you he has read books full of narratives of the fraudulent practises which women have used to defile and besmirch the innocence, natural nobility, and stainless manner of life which from time immemorial have been the distinguishing traits of married husbands and unmarried bachelors. And he will tell you that he invariably makes a point of unhesitatingly giving cr  dence to these same narratives

He will relate tales of the astonishing exuberance and ceaseless loquacity displayed by women in articulation of the spoken word, and of their characteristic aptness for politely saying rude things about, and to, other wearers of basement bargains. And although he will admit that woman's artful beauty and synthetic loveliness have at various periods made him open his eyes to unusual extents and shake violently in his toe-rags, yet he will say that he is thankful that he never allowed his heart unduly to palpitate on any one woman's account—and a lot more of other cynical things strongly reminiscent of what the fox told the grapes.

Lastly, life on the Toby means, sooner or later, death on the Toby. For besides hardening the arteries and giving rise to varicose veins, it affords newly-wed housewives too much scope for unlimited practice in detrimental (because experimental) cookery.

## II

## PEOPLE OF THE TOBY

LIBERTY, equality, fraternity—that is what the Toby offers. One and indivisible you find it on the Toby. For of all mankind, who so free as the tramp? who so equal as paupers? who so brotherly as brotherless men?

Theirs is that holy trinity, and vagabondom is their republic. *Mate*, they say, and *chum* they say, and tolerance is their travelling-companion. Because you never catch tramps quarrelling on the road. In the city, perhaps, but never on the road. I've never seen them. No, not in ten thousand miles of travel have I ever seen tramps quarrelling on the road. For it is their republic, where peace reigns, and to fight is treason.

When I think of the Toby, old chums, old mates, good lads all, they muster before me the rogues and vagabonds of my wander-years In serried phalanx they turn as one, each with his face to me, grinning the while And like a huge army, terrible, but without banners, they march past to the quick-step, *Bundle and Go!*

Ah, I know you well, you rogues, you ragamuffins Haven't I tramped with you, supped with you, slept with you, even scratched with you? Then step on it, you cripples Let the tramp-gait swing Do as you did when we marched together

Their very names are redolent of the life Bohemian Here's a few of them, judge for yourself Leather Blanket, Fatty Fairweather, Drunken Tom, The Screw, One-eyed Scottie Jim, Old Carbohc, New Year Mick, The Talking Fish, Curley the Darkey, Darky the Jew, Taxi Bill, Kettle Belly, Dragged-Up, Walking Webster (the bloke wot swallowed the dictionary), The Whitechapel Yank, and scores of Scotties, Paddies, Taffies, Brummies, Yorkies, and Yellow Bellies

There is one name, however, which pushes its way to the front of my memory, and it I shall never forget What tramp could? It is the name of the Wanderer himself The Seeker, 'Lost' Kinnell And, some day, about the romance and the wonder and the mystery of his ceaseless quest I shall weave a poem Mere prose would never do it sufficient justice And in it I shall tell what I must now leave to you untold

Again, there are other countless tramps who are nameless, and of whom I know nothing at all, but who nevertheless remain unforgettable from the romantic circumstances under which they and I met Between us there was "only a look and a voice, then darkness again and the silence" And

like ships that pass in the night each went his way,  
never to meet more

Of these there is the Scot that left me on Porlock Hill, that you know about Similarly the cultured scholar-gypsy of the secret skypper above Lost-withiel Likewise the tramp I slept out with on Oddicombe Beach, sitting in a summer twilight swapping lies and admiring the strung lights above Babbacombe Bay Also, the patriarch in the Bideford cowshed, who, being well nigh frozen to death, rose from beside me in the early hours to seek a warmer hole

As I write, too, more and more come thronging, pleading for remembrance dusty, ragged, broken-booted men Some I passed by on the road with only the stiff nod and the curt "How do!" that etiquette demands With others I lay on green banks and by shining rivers, discussing mumpers' business And a few I walked with as, for example, the ex-prizefighter who was my buttie from Northampton to London, the gigantic Finn with whom I foregathered for a space and travelled with for a mile up near Whitby, and who said he had sailed round the world three times, stowed away on ocean liners, and yon American who palled it with me from Berwick-on-Tweed to Edinburgh, whose lay was fleecing ministers These shoulder their way to the front

Then there are those numberless tramps I met in spikes Especially the two who worked with me in the kitchen of Edmonton's palatial workhouse And well do I recollect how loudly we laughed when it gradually leaked out that each of us had sewn mail bags in Brixton And Truthy Cocksedge, too he of Rochford spike With him I divided an enormous lump of jammy duff that with the help of a daft deaf-mute we had annexed from the

over - victualled cookhouse But their name is legion

Thus they pass in review And although drowsiness has clothed most of them in rags, yet on the whole they are good lads every one So I take the salute as they goose-step past hard-necked, brass-faced, vagabonds all !

## III

## SKYPPERS AND RUFFERS

ALTHOUGH the days of a tramp may, generally speaking, be devoid of variety, the same cannot be said of his nights For while every day finds him padding along the same old road, every night finds him dossing in a different bed

And when I say bed I don't mean what you mean when you say bed I mean a flopping place, just that and no more And, spikes and padding kens excepted, a tramp knows only two kinds of flopping places skyppers and ruffers

To the majority of the vagrant train, you must understand, an ordinary bed is as unfamiliar as milk in their tea So much so, indeed, that when a tramp lies down in a dosshouse kip after a lengthy period of sleeping out-of-doors, he very rarely enjoys a restful night So used has his body become to acute discomfort that comfort itself makes him acutely uncomfortable, wherefore he turns and tosses the whole night through, a perfect example of what he virtually is a savage galled by the amenities of civilisation

It is but natural that this should be so After all, what is a tramp except a savage ? Isn't he an atavism ? Isn't he a throw-back ? Doesn't he approximate more closely than anybody else to the primeval driftman, the skin-clad hunter of the long

ago ? And if clotheslines weren't so handy, or housewives so generous with their menfolk's offcasts, I do assure you that tramps clad in rabbit skins would in no time make picturesque the roads

To return to our beds Although a son of the Toby feels uncomfortable in proper sleeping places, that is not to say he invariably feels comfortable in improper ones Such is not the case You who read this cannot imagine what hell's own excruciating agony vagrants and roadsters undergo night after night. Nay, you who have never slept outside of bedsteads are to be pitied, you cannot appreciate, as a tramp can, what a marvellous comfort a soft and warm bed is And it is this hell's own excruciating agony of his nights, especially of his winter nights, that makes a tramp so very fond of basking for long hours beneath summer suns

On the other hand, so inured has the tramp become to having discomfort for his bed-fellow that he has grown at last to ignore it, or, if not to ignore it, at least to endure it stoically Why, it isn't the first time that I have come upon an uncovered fellow-vagrant lying blissfully asleep in the rain, and who waxed exceedingly wrathful on my wakening him up to tell him so

But you want to know what *skyppers* and *ruffers* are Well, *skypper* is old cant (not slang, be it noted) for a flopping place that in some way or other is sheltered from the weather by a roof as a barn, a cowshed, etc The word itself means *barn*, and is one of the very few cant terms remaining from the time when rogues and vagabonds spoke cant

*Ruffer* I am not so sure about Indeed, the very spelling is uncertain If the tramps who use it were to write it down, I imagine, they would spell it *rougher*, from its association with roughing it But not I I like to think of it as being a derivative

of that other old cant term *ruffmans*, denoting bushes, undergrowth, etc. Because a ruffer is a bed in a bush with no shelter overhead except the wide and starry sky

The skyppers and ruffers I have slept in, and often failed to sleep in, are numberless. They are scattered all along the highways and byways of Great Britain. In England, Scotland, and Wales, from Land's End to John o' Groat's, those unmade beds of mine are lying as I left them in winter sunrises, in summer dawns, in autumnal mists. And the suffering I endured in some of them would furnish purgatory with pain enough for all eternity.

Strange to say, the harder and more painful my bed was, the lovelier and more beautiful were my dreams. In those beds I dreamed wonderful dreams, marvellous dreams, *serial* dreams. I would fall into a dog-nap, dream a dream, then the pain in my limbs would wake me up. And thereupon I would turn over, fall into another nap—and dream the continuation of my dream. And so it would go on all night dreaming, episode by episode, dreams that for length, interest, and plethora of characters were like a Dickens novel.

I have slept in barns, cowsheds, pig-holes, horse-mangers, corn-ricks, haystacks, ditches, and hedge-bottoms. Also in sea-caves and in hill-caves, on open moors and in dark forests, by bleak mountain tarns and in low green valleys. Once, at Euston Station, I dosed in a mail hamper, at another time on the back doorstep of a cinema theatre, again in a wheelbarrow, at various other times on the Thames Embankment, in police cells, in tramp wards, in dosshouses, in padding kens, and in other queer and outlandish places too numerous to mention.

Some of the skyppers I have slept in were not far



removed from being furnished apartments. One of these skyppers-de-luxe, on the road between Bristol and Weston-super-Mare, actually boasted flowered wallpaper, glass windows with chintz curtains, a cooking-stove, yes, and likewise an armchair. It was a railway coach, you see, which had been converted into a temporary dwelling. And I assure you I spent a most comfortable night therein. Amongst other things which the former tenants had left behind were a lot of sacks and a cartload of hay, so with these I made a most luxurious couch. And I set the stove a-roaring, and while the wind howled and the tripper-laden charabancs careered madly past, I lay back in the armchair and thanked my benign mother, the road, for this her bounty.

Another time, at Hele Bay near Ilfracombe in North Devon, I slept with a navvy in a skypper high up on the cliffs overlooking the Severn. It was a beehive-shaped structure of stone, like a look-out tower, and proved a most romantic sleeping place. We could lie back in our straw beds and gaze out and down through the airy doorway to the sea and shipping far below. And the sunsets and sunrises were glorious. In fact, so very ravishing was the all-embracing sea-view that I remained there a day and two nights until hunger drove me out.

Again, I once slept in a deserted aerodrome on Salisbury Plain not far from Stonehenge. And in the dim dawn I rose on worship bent and entered the great circle of stones. But, alas! yon little green-painted atrocity of a wooden shanty that flanks it, to say nothing of the vandalistic barbed-wire that bristles round it—yon fairly put my back up. It completely shattered whatever romantic expectations I may have had. As it was, the only satisfaction I got out of my visit to Stonehenge was

that I had seen it without paying sixpence for the privilege

Haystacks and strawstacks I have sampled hundreds of times. And although in the main they make cosy skyppers, yet each has its own peculiar drawback. Hay, for instance, when it has been prematurely led from the hayfield, is in the state that farmers call *red-hot*—it is wet and waim, and steam rises from it. So you can readily imagine that sleeping amongst hay in this condition is like sleeping in a Turkish bath. But that isn't all. Hay is likewise the abode of millions upon millions of tiny creatures, like animated grains of sand or microscopic lice, which penetrate to every seam and gusset in the sleeper's clothing. And an astonishing amount of vigorous brushing is necessary before these myriad mites will dislodge themselves.

Similarly, the drawback of sleeping amongst straw is that one can't turn without making the devil of a noise. Every little move one makes, every breath one draws, is accompanied by such a rustling and crackling of the straw that one imagines the whole farm must hear and come to investigate. And when the straw happens to be barley straw the little needle-like beards of the chaff cling to one's clothing even more tenaciously than do the hay mites.

Then, of course, in skyppers in the vicinity of farmyards there are always rats to be encountered, and mice, and now and again an odd ferret or weasel, and other creatures which never show themselves but which keep on creeping and rustling towards the would-be sleeper in a most nerve-racking manner, yet never drawing any nearer. I mean the creatures of one's own imagining. And lastly, there is always the greatest drawback of all—the farmer himself.

If we define any art as a regulated operation or dexterity by which talented beings pursue ends which they know beforehand, then to designate as such the practice of peglegger is no more than to state the truth

And not only is it an art, and a useful art, it is also a fine art. The professional peglegger has raised it to such. He lives, moves, and has his being, for, by, and because of, his dexterous exercising of that same art. It is at once the means of his existence and the end, wherefore he takes delight in constantly plying it, and fails, and refuses, to see any shame in it.

If it is good to do good to others, he argues, with what he is convinced is unimpeachable logic, then surely it is equally good to make others do good to you! If hospitals and Hallelujahs can openly and unashamedly, without fear and without reproach, beg in the broad light of day, he goes on, and by so doing not only win kudos for others but haloes for themselves, then why in the name of uneven-handed Justice is it an outrageous enormity when he goes and does likewise? It beats him. And if you persist that these hospitals and Hallelujahs beg not for themselves but for the unfortunate poor, he instantly rises to demand what the horse-blinkers you imagine him to be the unfortunate rich? You can't show him any difference. For him no difference exists.

But seldom, if ever, does the peglegger worry his noddle about the ethics of the thing. He is content to regard it all as a game. Hence, when I catapulted myself on to the Toby, being in Rome I did as the Romans did. I ditched whatever ideas I may have had anent the right and wrong of peg-

leggery, called for a new deck of cards, so to speak, and got down to it bald-headed with my coat off

It was a marvellous education, too I wouldn't have missed it for millions It revealed to me human nature in a most edifying state of *unveneer* It vouchsafed me most exceptional sight of men and women as they actually are, not as they pretend to be I beheld them, as it were, in moral dishabille I saw them with their skins off Politeness, etiquette, breeding, all fell away from them when they opened their back doors to me They then stood revealed naked to the soul Doffed, for once, were their masks, their false faces, and their deceitful *company* disguises when the beggar confronted them What need of pretence where a tramp is concerned? Absolutely none Then off with the motley! Away with the camouflage! Ring up the curtain on humanity in the raw!

Now, the tree of pegleggery has many branches And, although both the organised but cheery exhortation of alms by hooligan undergraduates, and the dumb but none the less naughty solicitation of free teas by tea-time visiting clergymen are numbered amongst the larger boughs, still, these I shall skip I wish to deal solely with the peglegging practice of honest, above-board, *bona-fide* mumpers, scroungers, and panhandlers

Of the many assets which the prospective peglegger must needs possess before he can set his foot at all confidently on the broad and stony path that leadeth down to the back doors of suburban semi-detacheds, those of a lying tongue, a histrionic talent, a cyclopædic knowledge of human nature, and a heart that deviseth instantaneous imaginations, constitute the Big Four

These must always be immediately at hand When the insidious grafter knocks at a door he has

as much idea about who will open to him as a Turkish bath attendant has about Turkey. Thus, when the door does open he has at once to take the can in hand and apply on the instant the one and only fool-proof can-opener that will puncture the tin and deliver the doings.

He must not hesitate. He who hesitates is lost. As the door swings open to the full width of the customary two inches, and he finds himself confronted with the usual strip of annoyed human face pressed enquiringly into the opening, the peglegger has to out with his tale without a moment's loss of time. In the lightning interval elapsing between his vision registering sight of the face and his brain registering sight of the vision, the peglegger, I say, has to sow, reap, thrash, winnow, grind, bake, and serve up smoking hot, with fancy sugar dressing, the one and only doughnut which the visible strip of human countenance will masticate, swallow, and digest.

That is, of course, if the peglegger in question be an artist. Beggars who are merely beggars don't bother to tell a tale. They simply ask for what they want, crudely, inartistically, with no frills about the asking thereof. If they get what they want, well and good. If they don't get it, well, they want it, wax defamatory, and move along to the next Christian dwelling.

These latter are the amateurs. They give nothing in return for what they receive. Therein they differ from the professionals. A professional peglegger possesses a conscience, an artistic conscience, and until that conscience is satisfied that its owner has adequately balanced with *give* his account of *take*, it keeps him *giving*.

Once the beggar has obtained the ear of the door-opener it remains solely with himself whether or not he will bring off a coup. The door-opener has no

say in the matter at all. He or she, although in full possession and in seeming control of the horn of plenty, is nevertheless a helpless puppet dangling on the strings which the puppet-master of a peglegger so cunningly manipulates. Also, before the latter has opened his mouth he knows by instinct, and other processes, the amount of largess the victim is good for, likewise the form it will take, whether in kind or in currency.

Why, even before he has knocked at the door at all he has sized up the nature of the householders by the exterior of the house itself. He can tell by the outside of a house what manner of people are its inmates. According as the door-brasses are bright or tarnished, for example, he deduces the character of those inside. Cleanliness, although not exactly indicative of godliness, is yet an excellent criterion. But a too clean exterior always argues a too moral, therefore parsimonious, nature within doors. Contrariwise, a very dirty exterior nearly always augurs kindheartedness.

Again, the size of a house guides the peglegger in his estimate of its beggability. And significantly enough, the bigger the house is the harder are the owners' hearts. The greater the means, it seems, the greater the meanness.

A comfortable neatness about the front of a house is invariably a good sign. So is the number, variety, and colour of the flowers in the front plot. The pattern of bell, knocker, letter-box, etc., reveal the taste, and so the disposition, of the people living behind them. And the begging tramp—the professional artist in mendicancy, I mean—is rarely far out in his deductions therefrom.

When telling the tale to the goodwife or goodman who opens to him, the scrounger has also to act the part. It would be no good his claiming to be a

public schoolboy on his uppers, for instance, if his accent shrieked of Billingsgate or Camlachie And when relating how his angelic mama has just died of consumption and his brutal stepfather has belted him from home sweet home, he must pump up the requisite teariness to accompany such sob-stuff His acting, like his tale, must convince, else his audience hands him the bird or to a policeman

Further, he must exercise restraint, artistic restraint A too voluble beggar is listened to with suspicion So the more the listener can be made to imagine that it is he himself who is dragging the tale out of the teller against the latter's inclination, the better will be the result

But suppose the beggar's yarn has been masticated, swallowed, but only partly digested, what then? Is our artist in mendicency, as also in mendacity, content to take his departure and leave it at that? Not on your life! He is not so easily bested as all that He never says die till he hears the earth and stones rattling down on top of his coffin lid He has still his trump card to play

That trump card is the manner of his going And neither an Irving nor a Tree ever made an exit with such consummate artistry as does your trump-playing tramp He uses his mobile back as the vehicle for a pantomime the most expressive in all the world His face being toward the gate, he puts all the heartrending pathos of his outcast state into that eloquent back of his His head hangs His feet drag With what an air of martyrdom does he open the wicket And how carefully he closes it And in what a last, long, lingering look of unutterable dejection does he lift his hurt eyes to the black-hearted refuser of alms whom he knows full well to have been the interested, and weakening, spectator of all this mummary

And if the peglegger has acted his part as it should be acted, he thereupon cocks his ear for the expected and always forthcoming applause in the shape of

"I say! Half a minute! We get so many beggars here, and it's so very hard to tell who's genuine and who's not So, if you don't mind waiting a moment——" and so on and so forth

And the successful hypocrite, as he victoriously retraces his steps up the garden path, emits the long fluttering sigh of an artist who has once again put the finishing touch to yet another masterpiece As Longfellow, or it might possibly have been Goodfellow, sort of said "Something attempted, someone done——"

PEGLEGGERY is double-sided It has its comic side as well as its tragic side And whether the peglegger sees the first oftener than the second depends on how he looks at things

If he has let the abuses of adversity knock the stuffing out of him, he looks on all things with a jaundiced eye He discredits the very existence of humour He refuses to admit there is anything even remotely suggestive of the comic connected with his sad search for begrudged grub known as peglegger He is the pessimist

But such pessimism is as rare on the Toby as a Jew-boy or a Cockney Roadsters, in the main, must of necessity be incorrigible optimists Their lives depend on it And through time this state of assumed optimism becomes habitual, chronic, and ingrained, and as much a part of their make-up as their wheedling whine And to these the humours



of peglegger are as plain as the sun at noon-day

I remember once coming upon a tramp who lay kicking with laughter in a Devon lane Buns, currant buns, in weird stages of overbakedness and underbakedness, were scattered all about him, and it was manifest that he had peglegged them at the house whose smoke I saw rising above the trees

"Hello," says I, stopping and looking down at the laugher "What's the joke, chum?"

"The joke, mate?" he splutters, sitting up and cuffing the tears out of his eyes "Them there buns is the joke You try one Oh—ha! ha! ha!" and off he went into another kink of laughter

Try one I did, and nearly dented it in an effort to bite into it

"I ast her for bread, mate," got out the laugher between laughs, "and instead of giving me a stone, she—ha! ha! ha!—she gives me a whole blinking quarry!"

Yes, you housewives, we know your tricks We know, too, your experiments in cookery, you newly-weds To our cost be it said And your hubbies have much to thank us for We ask you for bread and you give us stones, and what stones! Or you take us at our word and give us—bread, which you afterwards find at the stairfoot

"It isn't bread they want at all," you say, "it's money" Maybe so, we, too, are human But by bread we mean food, my lady of the dust-cap If we asked for steak pie or chicken broth would you give us it? It's problematical And anyway, how would you yourself like to exist on one long continual diet of bread, madam? We assure you it palls We likewise assure you that we are not at all averse to a tomato sandwich on occasion And a cup of tea we will never refuse We dote on tea Only,

don't stand waiting while we drink it, if you please  
Go in till we knock Your cup and saucer will be  
returned to you, madam, never fear

Yes, we are up to your tricks, you housewives, as  
you are up to ours "Wait a minute, my man,"  
you say, then—"You don't mind my shutting the  
door? The draught, you know——" Ah, yes,  
we know about the draught But perhaps the hall-  
stand loomed bigger in your thoughts than did the  
draught, madam, eh? We, too, noticed the quite  
stealable coats on it, likewise the silver-mounted  
walking sticks And we, too, tell lies at times

A beggar has much to put up with in the way of  
hand-outs He gets all sorts of queer things given  
him at doors He goes up to a house, say, ravenously  
hungry, weakly begs for food—and is handed a half-  
penny postage stamp That happened to me once  
Or else he is given a bundle containing—not food,  
but feminine underwear That also happened to  
me And other things equally beside the point are  
from time to time proffered him by well-meaning  
patrons Tracts and Bibles, however, predominate  
I once was handed, in lieu of food, a big gilt text  
(a Job's comforter if ever there was one) which ran  
"Man shall not live by bread alone——"

Talking of tracts and texts reminds me of a queer  
religious community I once stumbled upon in an  
out-of-the-way part of Essex In this case the  
aphorism of cleanliness being next to godliness proved  
fallacious For never in all my born days have I  
encountered such downright dirt as I encountered  
then The people wallowed in dirt, their houses  
were held together by dirt, their backyards were  
not so much backyards as rag-and-bone yards  
a-moulder under the filth of ages But, in spite of  
their midden-like environment, the people were not  
only a deeply religious people, but also a good people,

a kind people, a God-fearing people So that at every house I knocked at I was taken in, treated to the best without stint—and then solemnly and earnestly prayed over !

But being prayed over is not such an uncommon ordeal in the life of the peglegger as you would suppose I myself have survived at least half a dozen such ordeals

When Solomon in his inspired wisdom declared that he that giveth to the poor shall not lack, but he that hideth his eyes shall receive many a curse, he knew what he was talking about Beggars' curses are proverbial And they sting But not half so much as do beggars' sarcasms These blast — Ha ! ha ! ha ! Pardon the laughter , but when I think of the vials upon vials of caustic sarcasms I have poured out on innocent householders I can't help but laugh

I used to know intimately an unprincipled black-guard—a good lad he was—who had a long list of biting sarcasms and gems of vitriolic repartee off by heart , so that, when occasion rose, he could fire them off with most devastating effect His victims were mostly harassed and beggar-badgered housewives, 'tis true, but, even so, he always saw to it that the front gate was shut tight behind him ere he opened fire Bitter experience had taught him what some never learn that Hell knows no fury like a woman scorned !

The answers the peglegger gets in reply to his request for tommy are oftentimes exasperating The commonest and most irritating is the senseless—“Not to-day, thank you” It makes the peglegger mad “Not to-day,” would be bad enough, but that wholly uncalled-for “thank you” puts the tin hat on it What the deuce has she, the housewife, got to thank him, the peglegger, for ? Tell him that !

I once hotly contested this point with a woman on her own doorstep, but as she whistled shrilly, and unexpectedly, for the police, I had to retire before the point was settled

Of course, when a beggar receives "Not to-day, thank you," in reply to his request for nourishment, he can get his own back simply by replying, "Don't mention it, madam!" or "To-morrow, then?"

As a rule, when women give away anything at the door their giving is rarely lavish. But with men it is otherwise. Once start a man succouring a beggar and you can't get him to lay off. The more he gives the more he wants to give, until finally his more economical better-half nudges him to stop, and audibly whispers that the recipient is "only a beggar, and that striped dickey's too good to give away yet." But, naturally, there are exceptions in both sexes. I have met women from whom I had literally to run away, for very shame's sake, they were so superlatively kind. Aye, and I have met men from whom I had also to run away, they were so superlatively unkind!

A beggar sees human nature at its worst and at its best. He knows to what nadiral depths it can sink, and to what zenithal heights it can soar. He knows how unbelievably kind it can be, and how unbelievably unkind.

Would you think it possible, for instance, that in this day of Christian enlightenment there existed a human being, rich and possessed of all that makes life worth living, who could be so wanting in the milk of human kindness as to hand over to the police another human being whose only fault, at the moment, was that of lacking all which she possessed? Well, there does exist such a one. She is a woman—save the mark! And she it was who, in cold blood and glorying in her cold-blooded-

ness, had me arrested because I had dared to beg a crumb of her superfluity of crumbs

I was arrested and given a night in the cells, all right, but surely that was a singular miscarriage of justice? Surely it was the woman who should have been arrested and given a night in the cells? Hers was the greater crime. She had committed unkindness. And I? I had merely broken the Law

And should these words happen to come under your notice, madam, the pricking of your conscience (always supposing you have a conscience) will let you know it is to you whom I allude. It will remind you of that past deed of wickedness. I pity you. And I hope and trust you have by this time thought out a good excuse for your heathen conduct. For only the best excuses, madam, suffice beyond the portals. St Peter, they say, is a stickler in such matters

To conclude. I think that the reason for the spell which begging casts over beggars is nowhere more lucidly explained than in the verse of an old ballad that runs

“Of a’ the trades that I do ken,  
The begging is the best,  
For when a beggar’s weary—  
He can sit down an’ rest!”

WHERE are they taking us?

If I could only see where they are taking us it wouldn't be so bad, I wouldn't care. But I can't see. They don't mean us to see. When they made this thing they built it so that nobody ever could see where they were being taken. It's terrible. It's

like walking the plank blindfolded , we never know when the end will come , we know it's coming, we expect it every minute to come, yet it doesn't come And we can't see where they are taking us

I've never been in a Black Maria before But I've tried to earn a living by writing verse, so I've been in a pawnshop And that's what it's like It's like a pawnshop on wheels , a very tiny, squeezed-up pawnshop on wheels

Six little very narrow boxes, like confessional boxes, face six other little very narrow boxes across a little very narrow passage Each little confessional box has a little door, and each little door is barred on the outside And each little door, too, has a square little wire grille let in at the top So that when we stand up in our little boxes we can look out across the little very narrow passage And each time we do this we look straight into the face of the opposite jack-in-the-box who is looking straight into our face across the little very narrow passage And when we sit down again we look straight into nothing but the shiny surface of the little door not two inches off our nose

For our little confessional boxes are so tiny They're like strait-jackets or coffins There's just room to stand up, sit down, and turn round, but no room to stretch That's why only slim men are put into Black Marias Fat men would stick and suffocate, so they put them into taxi-cabs

But I wish I could see I want to know where they're taking us The little glass window up behind me is frosted so that I can't see No matter how hard I look I can't see Sometimes faint sort of images pass quickly across the glass, but I don't know what they are , I can't see what they are It's like a camera-obscura terribly out of focus I can make nothing out My eyes are strained trying

to make something out of the faint sort of images that pass quickly across the frosted glass of the little window up behind me in the confessional box of the Black Maria

I wonder where they are taking us

I asked the policeman if he knew where they were taking us I shouted at him. But he didn't seem to hear me, he couldn't hear me; I couldn't hear myself For this noise is terrible Rumble, rumble, rumble all the time There surely can't be tyres on the wheels that they make such a terrible noise and shake us up so And it never stops. It quickens up at times and slows down, but it never stops, rumble, rumble, rumble all the time It's getting on my nerves

Then there's the turning of the corners That's getting on my nerves, too We can't see where we're going, so when the Black Maria suddenly turns a corner it throws us all about and makes us feel like being in a lift that's going to stop It's getting on my nerves like the rumble, rumble, rumble of the wheels and the faint sort of images that pass quickly across the frosted glass of the little window up behind me It's getting on my nerves, I tell you! Oh, I wonder where we're going Where can they be taking us?

I asked the policeman, you know, but he didn't hear me He's sitting just outside there in the little very narrow passage, with his back against the door of the Black Maria He's sitting on a little hinged seat like a bracket that he lets down when everybody's in and puts up flat against the side of the passage when everybody's going out He's sitting there, and the rumbling and the turning of the corners make him shake all over and swing about just like us

I didn't know he was there at first I found he was by pressing my cheek against the square little

wire grille at the top of my door and looking along the little very narrow passage out of the corners of my eyes. And he's there now. He's sitting on his little hinged seat with his helmet off and shaking all over and swinging about.

He's common and stern-looking. I've noticed that all policemen are common and stern-looking when they take their helmets off—as common and stern-looking as the Roman Emperors I once saw in the British Museum one day I went in there until the rain went off. And he's getting on my nerves sitting there on his little hinged seat with his helmet off. Why doesn't he say where they're taking us? Well, why doesn't he!

And that jack-in-the-box opposite me across the little very narrow passage never sits down. He's always looking straight into my eyes every time I look to see if he's still looking at me. Why doesn't he sit down? And he's got red hair and he won't stop whistling. His whistling's terrible. It rises over the terrible rumbling of the wheels and gets on my nerves terribly. He's been whistling at me ever since they put him in there opposite me. He's whistling now and looking straight into my eyes. *The Bluebells of Scotland*. Why does he always whistle nothing but *The Bluebells of Scotland*? Why doesn't the policeman stop him! Can't he see it's getting on my nerves!

Everything's getting on my nerves. The red-haired jack-in-the-box opposite me across the little very narrow passage who looks straight into my eyes and whistles *The Bluebells of Scotland*, the common and stern-looking policeman sitting outside there in his little hinged seat with his helmet off and shaking all over, the rumble, rumble, rumble of the wheels and the sudden turning of the corners, and the faint sort of images that pass quickly across the frosted glass of the little window up behind me.



in the very tiny confessional box of the Black Maria. It's all getting on my nerves, and they won't tell me where they are taking us. Oh, this is terrible!

When the other policeman took me down the main street yesterday, after the woman had made him arrest me for begging, he wouldn't let go of my arm. I asked him to, but he wouldn't. I told him I wouldn't run away, but he wouldn't listen to me. I stopped and explained that I couldn't run away because my feet were all bleeding and sore. I showed him that they were all bleeding and sore. But he only looked straight in front with his head back and twisted my arm harder. And everybody was looking at me. They stopped whatever they were doing to look at me. Some ran on in front and then came walking slowly back so as to get a better look at me. Once a woman came out of a shop quickly and knocked up against me. And she was just going to say she was sorry when she saw the policeman with me, and she screamed and sprang away from me. It was terrible. But the Law's always terrible. For it wasn't me the woman was screaming at. It was the policeman. If he hadn't been with me she wouldn't have screamed. Even supposing I had just committed a murder she wouldn't have screamed. It was the policeman she was screaming at. But the Law's always terrible. It always hurts people and makes them scream. It must be a wicked thing the Law.

Ha! ha! ha! Imagine being in a Black Maria! Imagine walking down the main street yesterday with a policeman, and all the people pointing at me! Ha! ha! ha! It's the best joke yet. And their locking me up in a little cell and handing me in tea through a little square hole! Ha! ha! ha!

Curse you, over there, why don't you stop whistling? Can't you see it's getting on my nerves?

Whistle something else, can't you? Why must you always whistle *The Bluebells of Scotland*? Answer me, you red-headed swine, why must you! Do you hear? Shut up your infernal whistling! Stop it! Stop it, you crook! If I could get out of here I'd soon make you stop it! Why can't you sit down? What are you always looking straight into my eyes for? Answer me, you rotten thief! Shut up! Answer me! It's getting on my nerves! Answer me! Shut up! I'll kill you if you don't shut up! Oh, I'll kill you! I'll kill you!

Why—what's wrong? What's happened? Why is everything so suddenly quiet? Why has the rumbling stopped? Why don't we shake all over and swing about in our confessional boxes? Why have the faint sort of images stopped passing quickly across the frosted glass of the little window up behind me? What's the matter?

Let me see Oh, I must see! I'll press my cheek against the square little wire grille at the top of my door and look along the little very narrow passage out of the corners of my eyes Look! The policeman's got his helmet on! He's standing up! He's putting his little hinged seat up flat against the side of the little very narrow passage! He's opening the door! He—oh, I know! I know! The Black Maria's stopped! The Black Maria's stopped and we're there! We're there! *We're there!*

LONDON is its Sidi-bel-Abbes Its *salle-d'honneur* is the crowded dayroom of a certain Hallelujah caravansary on Thames's Surrey side Its legionaries are soldiers of *misfortune* They wear the kepi of hope, carry the knapsack of circumstance, and

fight shoulder to shoulder under the tricolour of adversity

But the joke about this forlorn legion, whose rank and file I shall parade before you, is that its legionaries are anything but forlorn. Far from it. That they ought to be, I admit. That they look as though they were, I agree. That by not being so they break all the laid-down rules of melodramatists and short-story magazine editors, I instantaneously concede. But that cannot be helped. The legionaries are men of metal, not fictional puppets stuffed full of the pseudo-psychological sweepings of sawpits.

To you, passing on a 'bus-top and looking down through the windows of this particular Hallelujah howff to the murk of the common dayroom within, these same legionaries appear drab, colourless, no-account men. You dub them loafers, moochers, work-shirkers, and dole-addicts, highly disreputable and not nice even to look upon. Poor you! Respectable existence has played the devil with your looking apparatus. It's glasses you want, and that badly. But leave it to me, I'll be your oculist, I'll cure your to-be-regretted astigmatism.

This dayroom, then, is the *salle-d'honneur* of the forlorn legion—the unofficial headquarters, it seems, of the world's younger sons and remittance-men. To it come from all over the earth the tag-rag and bobtail of homeless humanity. Here foregathers the man-who-was with the man-who-used-to-be, the chronic down-and-out with the one-time up-and-in. Here the brotherhood of man is fact, not fiction. And here the one and only Law (unwritten as are all truly effective Laws) is: Mind your own damned business.

Were you to stick your head in at the door and sing out "Jock!", more than half the dayroomers would look round in answer. For besides being the

headquarters of the forlorn legion this transpontine caravansary seems likewise to be Scotsmen's Mecca To them it is the terminus of the Great South Road and the disappointing end of their hegira

You see yon cosy corner by the radiator? That is Scotch Corner In it, at any hour of the day, can be seen and overheard a clannish bunch of needy Jocks confabbing ingenuously in the Doric and telling one another how best to approach the little side door in Fetter Lane, off Fleet Street, that leadeth in to the charities of the Scottish Corporation Or they may be saying things about the Salvation Army Or they may be attempting the impossible, trying to unbreech the Hielandman, by begging loans of one another Or they may be pooling their slender resources to buy a penniless Englishman his dinner

The dayroom, which also does duty as dining-room and drawing-room and smoke-room, is furnished with tables and chairs, pictures of the pretty-pretty school of painting, photographs of Hallelujah notoriety, and moral texts

Look Do you see that Cockney creature deftly whisking yon other bloke's dinner on to his own plate while the victim looks away? Yes, that one Well, over his head hangs a nice big text bearing the comforting legend "You are among friends" Then just above where yonder crowd of punters are earnestly studying form in the noon editions, another text warns us that—"Betting is a fool's game The bookmaker must win—or go out of business"

One does come across suchlike unconsciously humorous wall-decorations in dosshouses Here, for example, are three that have somehow stuck in my memory

*Gentlemen are begged not to eat food under the bed-clothes*



and what he underwent crossing over to Liverpool in a cattle boat He'll tell you all that, and you'll come away feeling you've been in contact with the raw, live stuff that adventure books are made of, and wishing unorthodox wishes

Yet another far-travelled legionary—the majority are all far-travelled cosmopolites—is to be found in the shabby person of Jock over there by the canteen He's an ex-Army and ex-Navy man He does nothing but sit and smoke and yarn the livelong day He's been over all India He'll talk of Simla and the Plains till you imagine Mulvaney is before you in the flesh It's like reading Kipling over again Then he toured America as a member of a prize band, then he was through the Boer War, and can tell you about Africa, then he has sailed the Seven Seas as a navyman, and as cook on a tramp steamer, then he was up in Murmansk and down in Gallipoli during the late war, then afterwards he was body-servant to a lord with a big estate near Oban, then he was sauce-cook in various London hotels, and once kitchen-porter in the Kit-Cat He is nearly sixty, yet doesn't look older than thirty Upright as a rush and agile as a young one, if ever anybody has had a crowded life that person is Jock

Here, to me, the very air seems actually to palpitate with romance and adventure Surrounding every one of these shabby modelers I perceive (but maybe my looking apparatus, too, is defective) a visible aura, an iridescent nimbus, as it were, that so dazzles my sight and fires my imagination that I feel, as though this dayroom were Valhalla and these loafers the God-chosen

Each is the flesh-and-blood hero of his own flesh-and-blood book Each is bursting with a saga to tell, his own doubly amazing, because truthful, saga For about none of these scarred veterans of

misfortune is the dullness or nauseating uninterest of respectability. None of them is a mere convention-patterned automaton. None of them is a stale piece of cabbage, or a fish-head such as cats love. They are not citizens, they are men.

And you would be amazed at the education some of these ragged legionaries possess. To cite only one instance of scores, that man with the neatly trimmed beard and obliquely-set eyes—Joseph Conrad to a T!—who sits in the little box giving out canteen checks, is a Cambridge man. He has been here about twenty years, it is said, and looks it. He is a rare classical scholar and a mathematician—I mean he was—but all he does these days is solve crosswords and talk to himself.

But he is not the only fallen angel here. The *Squire* and the *Doctor* are two more. The former used to be a master of foxhounds, and the latter once had a residence in the Harley Street district. Drink, or rather the intemperate abuse of drink, dragged them down, and there they are.

Of course, I know that all this sounds like what you read about in story books. But I can't help that. After all, surely there is nothing strange in an original bearing a suspiciously close resemblance to its copies?

Taffies, Scotties, and Paddies predominate in the forlorn legion. Their tongues, and other weaknesses, gave them away. Welshmen, for instance, are distinguished by their arrangement of vocal chords, Irishmen, by their arrangement of muscular sinews, and Scotsmen, by their arrangement of other people's businesses.

Some of these legionaries are fixed and remain here always, while others are birds of passage here to-day and gone to-morrow. Some come in toggled up to the nines and full of that stupid snobbery

which the possession of money nearly always engenders. Then they sink, and sink, and sink until their erstwhile glad rags give place to sad rags, and they totter out at last to the workhouse penniless philosophers, purged of all snobbery, and Little Friends of All the World. Or else they enter as weather-beaten tramps new in off the Toby, lean and ravenous and hail-fellow-well-met with everybody. Then they get a job, wear better clothes, wash themselves regularly, and rise, and rise, and rise until at last they leave the place, rich in pocket, but, in possession of snobbery, poorer and more despicable than paupers.

Such is the forlorn legion. To be numbered amongst its rank and file is to be a pupil in a school at once hard and painful, a school that is the acid test of the stuff of a man—it either makes him or breaks him.

## VIII

## IN THE JUNGLE

THROUGH from the above Hallelujah shelter, and connected with it, is a larger place (or rather was, for it has long since been pulled down and rebuilt) where the beds, instead of being ninepence a night, are only fourpence. It is the cheapest kip in London. And from the character of its frequenters, who belong to the ragged, bearded, long-haired, abysmally down-and-out, man-of-the-woods type of dosser, it is known as the *Jungle*.

Here, under an assumed name, I once lived for a period of more than a year. And the first night I spent beneath its roof came near—very near, within an eighth of an inch—to being my last night beneath any roof.

With only a threepenny bit and a copy of Tenny-



son's *Idylls of the King* in my pocket I had set out one midnight from Aberdeen to tramp the five hundred and odd miles that lay between me and London, and three weeks later, with the threepenny bit still intact, half the *Idylls* committed to memory, and accompanied by an ex-prizefighter whom I had encountered in the interior of a certain haystack near Northampton, I limped triumphantly into the metropolis

It was late when we two travel-stained tramps found ourselves outside this same *Jungle*. As I had squandered my long-hoarded threepenny bit on a much needed wash-and-brush-up, we were now absolutely penniless, so, since we had decided that the Embankment benches were a sight too cold and hard to sleep on just yet, here we were mooching free bed and board from the Hallelujahs

An old white-haired man, who sat locked up in a little box-office at the entrance to the place, takes us under his wing. He wears a bright scarlet jersey across the breast of which is written the startling legend *Blood and fire*, yet we find him at the angelic pastime of practising accompaniments on a tambourine. Explaining that we are the last to whom he can give free bed and board that night, he gives us some metal checks, two fourpenny bed tickets, and leaves us to our own devices

Taking the checks to the canteen at the far end of the huge dining-hall, we exchange them for two tinnies of barely drinkable tea and two slabs of what looks like pieces of drowned corpse, but which is really very good bread pudding. Then we sit down and begin to eat

The dining-hall is crammed full. Hundreds of down-and-outs of all sorts, shapes, and sizes sit on the benches busily eating their supper, and a most villainous crew they are. On every hand, no matter

where I look, I see nothing but ragged travesties of men with death-white faces and unkempt heads and beards veritable jungle-wallahs And the smell of them ! It is one thing to read about London's Great Unwashed, but quite another to be among them Filthy porters from Billingsgate with dry fish scales and guts glued to their rags, midden-rakers with their revolting sacks of treasure-trove spilling over on to the floor, Covent Garden hangers-on reeking of stale vegetables, sewer-gleaners, gutter-prowlers, horse-boys, etc, etc, imagine three or four or five hundred of these tightly packed into an over-heated, under-ventilated hall, and you get a faint idea of what the smell of London's Great Unwashed is like

There are some queer characters here, too One man is standing in a corner beating off the swarms of big trench-rats which, he says, are crawling up his body The war did that Another man, with only one arm to his torso, is running about in a little four-wheeled truck asking people to give him back his legs The war did that, too I have often wondered where battlefields dumped their human scrap, I know now Half the unfortunates in this shelter are ex-Servicemen, and there is not one sound man among them The other half are, in most cases, physically deficient, and sometimes mentally so

One old geezer sits crying softly to himself, letting out at intervals long bloodcurdling wails He is a half-wit But one has only to walk about the place to see others of a like kidney Men who talk and laugh to themselves are a commonplace, for the habit of soliloquy is an outstanding trait amongst down-and-outs It is caused by the loneliness of teeming cities

Every here and there one sees certain men with

little conical heaps of shag tobacco in front of them. These are the shagsters, or hard-up men. Then blend, which one can buy at the rate of a penny an ounce, is called hard-up, kerbstone twist, B D V. (Bend Down Virginia), and other names. It consists of fag-ends, cigar-butts, and other pleasant ingredients which these unlicensed tobacconists collect from the city gutters and bar-room floors during the day.

Besides these are the match-sellers, facetiously called *timber-merchants*, selling matches by the half-box. Outside in the lobby sits a frowsy old snobber who will cobble anyone's shoes for a consideration, either in kind or in currency, and beside him a tatterdemalion, a pavement artist, or *scrivener*, is engaged painting a summer landscape in oil-colour.

Old clo' men, tailors, barbers, trinket-vendors, fruit-hawkers, envelope-addressers, lavender-satchet fillers, paper-flower twisters, wire-goods manufacturers—oh, and scores more, are busily plying their different trades and crafts cheek by jowl, as though in an Eastern bazaar. Nay, there are even *dhoby-wallahs*, or washermen, rubbing out their clients' shirts and pants in the communal sinks through the wall from us.

When the evening service has been read, and a hymn sung, my pal and I retire to our sleeping quarters upstairs. Here we find that we are expected to sleep in beds which are of really weird construction. Imagine a shallow egg-box, with wire netting where the bottom should be, resting on four iron legs, that's a Hallelujah bed. The mattress, blanket, and pillow are of American cloth stuffed with dried seaweed, while the *linen* consists of two very coarse cotton sheets. It is certainly a noble fourpennyworth. And these beds stand side by side in long rows, as in a hospital, with only a

foot's space between each, so that privacy simply doesn't exist

The dormitory is a huge place. It is lighted at either end by flaring gas jets, and as I gaze about me I think I must be in Hell. The London dosser, you must know, goes to bed with nothing on, so that all around me I see stark naked men walking about as coolly as though they were fully dressed. One man, a full-blooded Ethiopian, wants to light his pipe, so what does he do but hop down the whole length of the dormitory to the gas jet on his one leg—the other has been amputated at mid-thigh—and hop back. Another man, in a similar state of nature, has lost his bed and goes about groping for it with a stick, he is blind. Again, two other unclothed ones come to blows over a stolen pillow, using the unwieldy sides of their beds, which they have detached, to belabour one another, and the entire dormitory has to rise as one man, all naked, to separate the fighters. If there is such a thing as Hell-on-earth, this is it!

Across the passage from me, a naked dosser, looking more like a monkey than a man, is sitting up in bed. Before him he holds a vile rag that once upon a time, long, long ago, was a clean shirt. And as he holds it up he examines it closely as if searching for something. And when he finds whatever it is he is hunting for, which is very frequently, he licks it off the shirt with his tongue, nips it viciously between his teeth, and spits it out. But not always. Sometimes he doesn't take the trouble to spit it out. Sometimes he swallows it.

My pal and I can't sleep. We lie sweltering in the fetid atmosphere yearning for morning. Although a time is to come when I shall lie in this same inferno and amuse myself with composing verse about it, yet at the moment I feel I should sooner leap off

from Blackfriars Bridge than lie here a second night. My flesh absolutely crawls with loathing horror at the things going on about me. I feel as though I am shut up in a lazar-house with grisly lepers for bedfellows.

At length my pugilistic pal falls loudly asleep and begins shaking the walls with thunderous snoring. I have never heard anything like it before, it makes the dormitory vibrate to its very foundations, so that soon we are being bombarded by an ever-thickening fire of Cockney curses, than which there is nothing viler or more putrid on God's earth. Then suddenly I hear a drunken yell at my ear, and, turning round to see what it is, I get the fright of my life.

Dancing about at the foot of the bed is a figure seen only in nightmares or dope-dreams. It is that of a stark naked dosser, with a great mop of hair falling down over on to his shoulders, flourishing an open razor in my face. But that isn't all. Twined hideously about this madman's body, from neck to knee, are the monstrous coils of a writhing serpent!

My blood runs cold. Am I seeing things? I ask myself. Or is this merely the consequence of eating a drowned corpse for supper?

"Come aht of it! Come aht of it!" screams the apparition, mistaking me for the snorer. "Wot in 'ell d'ya think I pays me fohpence for, eh? Eh! To 'ear a demned dahn-an'-aht liftin' the bleedin' roof orf, eh? Eh! Cantcha turn on yo' bleedin' back, eh? Eh! Cantcha! Wontcha! S'elp me Christ—tike thet!" and he slashes the razor across my bare throat.

He drew blood, all right, but he was just an eighth of an inch too high in his aim. Instead of cutting my throat from ear to ear, as he intended, he merely cut my chin to the bone, scarring me for life.

This, of course, was attempted murder, but to these Children of Cain it meant absolutely nothing. After all, it was booze that was the real culprit. So they just took the bloody razor away from my attacker and put him to bed. They didn't attempt to untwine the writhing serpent from his body, however, but merely admired it for what it was, a marvellously realistic piece of tattoo-work.

## IX

## THE SPIKE

OF the many remarkable similarities which exist between the silk-hatted loafer at the top of the social ladder and his broken-booted equivalent at the foot, not the least worthy of notice is that of the time-honoured institution of club life.

But while the suffering silk-hat must needs subscribe towards the financial upkeep of the particular pet hell, or hells, he is in the habit of frequenting, my luckier lord of the broken boot has for his backer a wonderfully considerate Poor Law which, like Wee Piggy Wiggy, most beneficently pays for all.

For the casual ward of the workhouse is trampdom's clubroom. It is where tramps meet and eat and smoke and joke, and forget for a while, amidst an atmosphere of social give-and-take, the almost hermit-like existence of their outdoor selves.

It is the tramp's home-from-home, and he calls it the *spike*. Why, he doesn't know, nor can anyone tell him. And to him it is a haven of refuge, a place of sanctuary, a cloister of retreat where can be met and hailed the old familiar faces, and where can be swapped with impunity the old familiar falsehoods and naughtinesses. And, as I remarked, there is no subscription.

All over England and Wales, and reaching right

up to Berwick on the Border (there being no spikes in Scotland), are scattered those free-for-all, come-as-you-are resthouses. And, with but few exceptions, a moderate day's walk separates each from each. That is to say, it is quite possible for a tramp who knows his routes, but who has not one penny piece in his pocket, to travel throughout the length and breadth of England and Wales for as long as he likes, and sleep free and full each night in a casual ward.

You may think this an exaggeration, if you wish, but you will be wrong. As proof of what I say I need only point out the so-called deterrents with which the Poor Law people imagine they have made the casual ward obnoxious to the tramp.

They limit his admission into any one spike to only once in the month. They detain him two nights. They seek to scunner him with feeds of gruel. They, the unfeeling wretches, give him work to do. And, last and most unkindest deterrent of all, they make him b-b-bath himself.

But the joke about these deterrents is that they do not deter. Far from it. What they really do is to render the spike even more desirable in the eyes of the tramp than it would be were there no deterrents. They label the spike forbidden fruit, therefore attracting where they should repel.

In the first place, the once-a-month limit of admission to any one spike is not hard to bear. The tramp, being essentially a roving animal, can easily see to it that his route doesn't lead him back to the same spike more than once in the month. But, if this does happen, then a change of name, etc., is all that is required to work the oracle.

Then, as to the two nights' detention rule. This is not always enforced. Some casual wards never detain their casuals longer than overnight. Others, again, detain them only when there are sufficient

tasks of work to go round Furthermore, as a tramp invariably has time to burn, and has in general nowhere particular to go, the two nights' detention rule doesn't worry him

But the gruel is a more serious matter And by gruel I mean spike diet generally It is slow poison It consists unchangeably (or rather consisted, for I'm talking of spike diet as it was prior to 1930) of unsweet tea or cocoa, or passable skilly, for the drinks, and of bread and margarine, jacket potatoes and cheese, for the eats For few, if any, workhouses ever allow meat of any description into the casual ward That would be too much of a good thing So you can understand that lengthy subsistence on such a fixed diet as this is suicidal And were it not that the tramp is always a beggar and nearly always a pilferer, this deterrent would really and truly deter

And now as to the work bogey It is no bogey at all And why? 'Cause tramps, as a body, like work And anyone who argues differently is not only perpetrating a very gross slander, but is also revealing a most lamentable ignorance of human nature Tramps are neither inhuman nor superhuman, therefore to them the thought of work is ever welcome Only, it must be paid-for work! If not, then they naturally fade away And never yet have I seen a tramp refuse a job for which he knew he would be paid Never On the other hand, I have seen hundreds of tramps indignantly refuse to work for nothing, or next to nothing And on these occasions I always applauded For the labourer, even if he be only a tramp, is none the less worthy of his hue any day of the week

Thus it is that the name *workhouse* fails to keep the vagrant out of the casual ward After all, is not the word *work* the most beautiful and alluring



in the whole of the English language ? Unquestionably ! Then why use it as a deterrent ? If the Poor Law people—bless 'em !—really desire to discourage vagrants from entering the spike, let them alter the name *Workhouse* to *House of Idleness*. And in place of detaining tramps only two nights and giving them work to do, let them detain them seven nights and give them no work whatsoever to do. That, believe me, would rapidly empty the spikes—at the same time, I'm afraid, as it would fill up the lunatic asylums !

Next comes the bath caper. And, just as tramps naturally welcome the thought of work, so, similarly, do they hail with pleasure any opportunity of cleansing themselves of that dirt and grime which is the unavoidable consequence of road travel. They revel in being clean. They abhor dirt. And were you to stop, say, a dozen tramps, and search well in their pockets, I lay 100 to 1 that at least eleven of them would be found in possession of that for which you would vainly seek in the pockets of respectable city dwellers—a well-worn piece of soap.

As I said, dirt is merely the consequence of road travel, inevitable and unavoidable. And tramps have no option but to grin and bear it. It is an inescapable part of their existence, just as it is with miners and motor mechanics. But be assured from me that they hate it heartily. I am a tramp, and I know. And, were the whole truth available, perhaps you would find that the dirty tramp—just because he is a dirty tramp—washes himself far oftener than you, who read this, do yourselves !

The preliminaries which must be gone through ere the vagrant wins in to the creature comforts of the casual ward, are nearly always the same. Whether it be in a poverty stricken spike, such, for example,

as obtains in Ashby-de-la-Zouch, or in a wealthy tramp palace such as that of Edmonton, the preliminaries preceding admission are always the same

There is always a big bell to push or pull There is always a grumbling porter to open the gate There are always the same personal questions asked name, age, occupation, where you've come from, where you're going to, whether you've got money, insurance cards, pension papers, etc And your answers are always written down in a ledger

Thereafter you are searched, sometimes by one porter, sometimes by one porter and his underling, the tramp-major But all search for the same smuggled articles money in general, and tobacco and matches in particular For smoking is strictly forbidden in casual wards Yet at every spike I've been in—no matter how thoroughly the tramps were searched, no matter whether, as oftentimes happened, as, for example, at Barnet spike, the men were stripped naked while every pocket of every separate garment was turned inside out, and all the linings, seams, and hems felt and examined over and over again—always has there been a great smoking of cigarettes and pipes and cigar-butts afterwards in the dormitory

All sorts of dodges are resorted to to get tobacco and matches smuggled past the searchers Shag is wrapped up in paper and stuffed into the toe of one's boot, fag-ends are hidden between the leaves of folded newspapers, matches are secreted in one's hair, the tramp-major is bribed Where the searchers do not strip the victim, and only feel the outside of pockets, a favourite cache is up beneath the coat between one's shoulder blades And so on and so forth The tricks are legion

(But, between you and me—ain't organised charity grand, eh? Now, ain't it? Ain't it, now, eh?)

After being searched, the condemned man—I mean the recipient of organised charity—is given a bath. But in a large number of country spikes, the tramp-major being lazy, this item is omitted. And should his clothes be chatty they are taken away and thoroughly ruined, or stoved. Then, feeling as clean as a new potato and as tender skinned, the casual trots off to bed to await supper and to hold high conversation with the other vagrants already in kip.

The beds, so-called, vary greatly. Some are plank beds laid on the floor. Some are wooden trough erections. Some are hammocks. Some are real iron beds with tick and pillow—stupendous luxuries!—all complete. And some, alas! consist of nothing more than a couple of sulphur-reeking blankets and a cold concrete floor.

When supper is eaten, and the obnoxious tramp-major has retired for good, then it is that cigarettes are rolled, pipes are lit, and tongues wax clamorous. And the spirit of clubdom reigns. Old friendships are renewed, old exploits retold for the hundredth time, and newcomers to the Toby are initiated into the mysteries of the vagrant brotherhood. Forgotten are their griefs and sorrows, the miles behind and the miles before. In happy laughter the hours go by. And one by one, while tongues grow silent, noses a-many take up the song

“ For men must work,  
 And tramps must sleep,  
 They refuse to earn,  
 So you’ve got ’em to keep,  
 Though the Poor Law purse be moaning ! ”

LONDON has its sights, the hidden and the unhidden. Of the latter the Zoo is the most horrible, of the former the most revolting is<sup>1</sup> the M A B the metropolitan limbo of lost souls.

You know the Zoo? You have been there? You have stood before the hideous cages imprisoning the eagles, and shuddered—or perhaps you were too completely civilised to shudder—at the tragedy of those drooping wings? You have stood before the lion's cage, or the tiger's cage, or the wolf's cage, and watched the heartrending pacing of the Wild? Pad, pad, pad, up, turn, and back again, ceaseless, demented, biding their time with incredible patience, laying up hate, storing by vengeance, vowing retaliations unthinkable in their ferocity. You have seen the horrid desolation of the Mappin Terraces, and the crazed dancing of the bears stupefied with ennui? You have seen the mangy hides? the lustreless eyes? the listless horror of the whole?

If so, and you still survive, you will find of interest what I am about to describe. You will, I trust, appreciate the analogy. You watched the denizens of an animal zoo—well, now watch the denizens of a human zoo.

I don't want to make your flesh creep or your blood to boil, but I do want to vex you. I do want to lay bare before you the horrors of the M A B so that afterwards you can thank your devout stars that you are not as other people are, and that your lot, bad as you think it, is as good as it is. For it is not good that one half of the world

<sup>1</sup> was Yet, although the M A B has passed, its work, under new management, goes on, and the limbos of the lost—these remain

should not know how the other half lives, and where

I first heard tell of the limbo in an obscure coffee shop at Ilford. My informant was a typical cadger. We were both newly released from Romford's colossal spike, and were heading hopefully towards London.

"Jock," said the cadger, in the prevalent lingo of the metropolis, "hae ye tried the M A B ? Weel, just you try it. There's nae better place in a' the Big Smoke. They keep ye clean, and they sen' ye oot clean—och, aye. And the beds, mon, they're radjy !"

When I arrived in London, though, I found that the mysterious initials had completely slipped my memory. For the life of me I couldn't recollect them. So, as my informant had omitted to tell me what they stood for, there was nothing for it but to try somewhere else for free board and lodging.

"Can you tell me where I can get a free bed ?" I asked of a policeman, after wandering about the city all day renewing old acquaintances and lamenting the passing of old landmarks. And the cop, saying, "First on your right, seventh on your left !" and leaving me gaping at his prompt explicitness, passed on.

Well, I took the first turning on the right, then the seventh on the left, and found myself outside Lambeth Workhouse.

"Dash it all !" I grumbled, somewhat disappointed, "this isn't exactly what I had in mind. However, it's better than the Embankment, so here goes."

Thereupon I rang the bell, was taken in, and underwent the usual questionnaire.

"I'm sorry," said the porter, after taking all particulars, "but we're full up. However, I'll give you

a transfer to Hackney Wick Here you are Show this when you get there And that's your tram ticket," and he showed me out

What he had given me was a transfer from Lambeth Workhouse to the one at Hackney Wick, that was clear enough But the other thing, what he had called my tram ticket, puzzled me until I had read it For it wasn't an ordinary tram ticket It was a printed voucher entitling the bearer to a tram ride at the expense of the—ah, ha!—Metropolitan Asylums Board the M A B

Now, it would take too long to tell you how for a couple of hours thereafter I rode in wrong trams, and 'buses, too, all over east London, how I was misdirected umpteen times, how I was taken for a lunatic looking for an asylum, and, in consequence, humoured by timorous tram conductors, how I was laughed at, how I was unmercifully chivvied by facetious policemen, and how, at long length, through the guidance of a fellow-seeker, I managed to gain admittance into the M A B refuge at Hackney Wick about one o'clock in the morning I repeat, it would take too long to tell all that, so we'll jump it and resume where I woke up a few hours later to find myself in one of the radjy beds of which I had heard in the Ilford coffee shop

"Come on, my lad, show a leg!" shouted the porter, opening my cell door and switching on the light "Come on and come out! Rise and shine, there—rise and shine!"

So up I got, hastily dressed, made my bed, washed in the communal sinks along with other inmates, and descended to the crowded dayroom to await breakfast

As it was still very early—barely five o'clock—and as breakfast (tea, bread, and margarine) wouldn't be served for an hour or more, I had plenty of time

to study the other human wrecks I saw sitting on all sides of me

The dayroom was packed with them. There must have been well over a hundred of these destitute refugees sitting on the benches about the tables. And I learned that these represented only the lesser portion of the total number of inmates, the others being housed on the opposite side of the exercise yard in a similar dayroom.

What a bunch! Like me, they were all straight in off the streets—orphans of the storm. Like me, they were each and all shuttlecocks of adversity, foodless, jobless, and moneyless. Like me, they were mostly clad in dirty rags and booted in sorry bachles, although here and there could be seen a well-dressed unfortunate trying to hide his dressiness—and his shame, his stupid shame—under a buttoned-up coat and drawn-down hat.

Ah, it was easily seen that none there was a Henley. None was master of his fate, none was captain of his soul. And although their heads were bloody under the bludgeonings of chance, yet at the same time they were all too patently bowed. These were society's weaklings—the unemployed and unemployable, the surviving unfit, unstable as water—none had excelled. Each bore on his face the tell-tale clue to his pauperism. Here it was in a receding chin, there in a low forehead, or else it was in a mouth, in a nose, in eyes. But no matter where, one could always wager on finding it—the chink in the armour, as it were, through which the Damoclean sword of circumstance struck in unopposed to the Achillean heel of vulnerability. And had there been any mirror on the wall I myself could have seen, no doubt, where my own weakness lay.

We sat on various bare wooden benches in different postures of dejection and hopelessness, leaning our arms and elbows on the bare wooden tables that constituted the sole furniture of the dayroom. Would breakfast never come? Would the raw electric light never give place to the dawn light? Would the windows continue to be rain-spattered blanks of wintry darkness through all the æons of eternity?

What a place to be in! What scum to mix with and be a part of!

Sitting opposite me was a youth (we were all youths!) with a pasty, unhealthy face, red hair, green eyes, and with nothing that could be called a chin. He was rolling cigarettes—minted gold in a place like this—and selling them for ten a penny. Before him was a big smelly heap of hard-up, or Bend Down Virginia, which he had collected yesterday from the gutters and bar-room floors. He had a packet of cigarette papers, too, and there he went at it, rolling the stuff into cigarettes and selling them as fast as he could roll. A grafter he among the graftless, only he. But how he had smuggled the makings past the lynx-eyed porters was a mystery, as was also how his customers had smuggled in their pennies. For tobacco and money were taboo in the M A B as in casual wards, invariably you were searched for them on admittance.

On my left hand was another youth who sat gazing before him into space, the while his head, of its own accord, oscillated steadily and mechanically as a pendulum from side to side. Nor did it ever cease to oscillate. Nor did the youth himself ever cease from gazing unseeingly into space. It was horrible. It was fascinating. But it so got on my nerves that finally I had to tear my eyes away and seek another seat.



That was a move for the worst, though I found myself next a man, a war victim, who kept flinging his limbs about with sudden and galvanic energy And when my head accidentally came in the way of his sweeping arm he turned and let loose on me the filthy sluices of his curse vocabulary So I had to shift again

But no matter where I went it was always the same I couldn't find one rational human being They were all in greater or less degree abnormal It was like being in a madhouse! And my flesh crawled at the thought of what might be the consequences of associating with such beings for a whole day more and another night

(On later visits, not only here at Hackney, but also at the Wandsworth and Paddington limbos, being *hable*, that is, having been an inmate of a London workhouse within the month, I had to spend not just two nights and one day in such company, but four nights and three days! And all that time, there being not enough work to go round, *I sat doing absolutely nothing*!)

Vacant minds, vacant eyes, vacant faces, dropped chins, wide open mouths, beastly tongues, morbid fancies, perverted morals, inferiority complexes, unemployed and unemployable, each and all victims of war's bloodless, deadlier sequel worklessness Each and all broken martyrs in the wake of war's juggernaut worklessness

If you could have taken a look in at any one of the M A B refuges for the homeless down-and-outs on a Sunday, you would have readily understood why I liken it to a human zoo You would have appreciated the analogy For then the inmates paced about the yard (as they still pace in greater and ever-growing numbers in present-day equivalents of the M A B) in a manner identical with that of

the jailed innocents in an animal zoo Pad, pad, pad, up, turn, and back again, ceaseless, demented, biding their time with incredible patience, laying up hate, storing by vengeance, and vowing retaliations unthinkable in their ferocity!

I HAD occasion to spend a week-end in the workhouse Two years having elapsed since I had been there last, I didn't expect to find things quite the same For within the past twelve months the workhouse had changed hands Instead of being administered by a Board of Guardians, as formerly, it was now administered by the County Council

And that this change of rule was for the worst I saw before ever entering the casual ward In place of having to ring and ring and wait and wait before an abusive porter condescended to open, as was usual and proper under the old régime, I found I had nothing to do but walk in through an open door

"Hello, there!" came the voice of the tramp-major from the booking-office window, "Where've you been these two years, Mac? Welcome home!"

I breathed with relief All the way up I had been trying to remember under which of two aliases, Andy Stewart and Elihu MacEwen, I had booked-in on my previous visits I knew now

Accordingly, when the porter, abetted by the tramp-major, began booking me in, I had my answers pat *Name?*—MacEwen *First name?*—Elihu *Occupation?*—Tinsmith *Age?*—How old do you think? *Birthplace?*—Corstorphine *Coming from?*—Wandsworth *Going to?*—Hackney *Any money?*—No *Been here before?*—Yes *Within the month?*—No

Then, as the tramp-major came out, I dutifully raised my arms above my head, hoping that the matches, fag papers, and shag hidden in the cuffs, would remain hidden

But the tramp-major he looks at me in puzzlement Says he

"What you doing that for, Mac?"

"Oh, chuck kidding," says I "Search me and get it over You won't find any matches or tobacco on me I don't smoke"

"Oh, you don't, don't you, eh?" says he, laughing and shoving me unsearched towards the day-room "Well, that's a pity Because, under the new regulations, Mac, smoking is pretty strictly enforced!"

When I had received the customary two slices of bread with the customary two little cubes of margarine on top, and the customary pint of tea-like liquid in the customary mug, I carried them into the dayroom and had supper Then I underwent a hot bath, my clothes were taken from me, and I was made don a nightshirt that reached to my ankles

"Now, pick up your blankets and scoot," ordered the tramp-major

I picked up the customary two from the pile, and was making for the dormitory when he called me back

"Didn't I tell you to pick up your blankets?"

"Sure you did"

"Then why have you took only two? Don't you know that under the new regulations you're allowed six? Pick 'em up!"

With stars of bewilderment dazzling my eyes, I did so and staggered into the dormitory Here every bed was occupied by a white-shirted, damp-haired, unnaturally clean casual And in the narrow spaces between the beds, on the concrete floor, were

laid more white-shirted, damp-haired, unnaturally clean casuals. Also, the passageway that ran the entire length of the dormitory was likewise cluttered up with white-shirted, damp-haired, unnaturally clean casuals. Two abreast they lay, and back to back, cursing the concrete and defying pneumonia.

One narrow space alone remained vacant. It was on the floor next the door where the bitter draught from the vestibule blew in. So, with four blankets under me and two over me, I lay down on that deadly spot and soon fell into the deep sleep of the tough tramp.

At the unholy hour of seven next morning the electric light snapping on awakened us. In our shirt-tails and barefooted we trooped out across the chill vestibule to where our clobber was stored. Here it was every man for himself. Entering the scrum on hands and knees I succeeded in retrieving my duds, and returned triumphantly to the dormitory.

Dressing rapidly I rolled up my blankets and fell into the stream of casuals making for the dayroom. Talk about traffic! Tramps in all stages of attire, from stark nakedness to many-coated dressedness, thronged the corridor. From my dormitory, from the opposite dormitory, from the double row of cells upstairs and downstairs, they poured seeming without end. Truly, these new regulations were popularising pauperism.

In the dayroom itself pandemonium reigned. The ten long tables, each seating ten men, were found insufficient. More tables, therefore, were set up in the bathroom. But even that left a score of dossers unaccommodated. So into the cells these annoyed ones were bundled, and breakfast was served.

A pint of tea, two slices of bread, and two cubes of margarine comprised the meal. When it was

scoffed and the tables cleared by the kitchen-men (casuals themselves), pipes were lit and cigarettes rolled. But the old joy in this rite was gone. The tobacco tasted like tobacco, not like some heavenly weed as of yore. For the smoking materials had not been smuggled in past the porter by wit and wile, they were contraband no longer. Smoking was permitted, not prohibited. Therefore, to smoke was to abide by the rules, and not to break them. Which degraded us Lawless vagabonds to the low level of Law-respecting citizens. Which was highly objectionable.

"Oh, good!" broke out a bloke at my elbow, "Here come the papers!"

"Papers?" I asked

"Sure. The Sunday papers. Don't you know that under the new regulations us casuals are entitled to newspapers?"

"But what's the idea?"

"To keep us from turning daft. To make the spike more homelike. To improve our minds."

But before we had time to assimilate the facts of the week's more important murder trials and divorce cases the voice of the porter was heard over the din ordering us out into the yard.

Out we crowded into the bitter cold. Above us on the top doorstep stood the porter calling for volunteers to do the necessary indoor tasks: sweeping and scrubbing floors, cleaning windows, making beds, fetching coal, and so on. And as each hypocrite stepped forward, his name was entered into the porter's note-book.

All too soon, however, the list of available jobs was exhausted, leaving nearly fifty of us with nothing to do. For in spikes, as in prisons and under Labour Governments, the problem is to devise labour. Had it been a weekday, of course, and not Sunday, we should have been put to work sawing up railway

sleepers into blocks, splitting the blocks into firewood, tying the firewood into bundles, and similar tasks

At first we didn't know how to occupy ourselves. Some walked briskly up and down to keep warm. Some nosed around hoping to pick up discarded fag-ends. Others faded away, never to be seen again, having won out to freedom over the garden wall. As for the rest, they herded into the woodshed, a few to mend their clothes, a few to cobble their shoes, and the remainder to swap lies, denounce Parliament, smoke endless pipes and cigarettes, and yearn for dinner-time.

As I was moving towards the woodshed, intending to join the yearners, the porter appeared and called my name.

"You're wanted inside," says he.

"Who wants me?" says I.

"A bucket and scrubber!" says he.

But a bucket and scrubber were not the only horrors awaiting me inside. There was likewise hot water, and a swab, and a kneeler, and soap, and elbow-grease, and an 18 by 30 feet stretch of cold, dirt-caked concrete vestibule.

This the porter ordered me to scrub white. Whereupon I got down on my marrow bones, and for the next two hours made pretend to be knocking my pan out. For I knew that the job had been given me not so much as a task as a time-killer.

When I finished, the tramp-major asked me to go round with him to the Big House, or workhouse proper, to fetch a load of bread. So round we went, and he showed me over the place.

"Mac," said he, piloting me through a room where contented paupers sat smoking, reading, and playing draughts and dominoes, "this is called the *House of Lords*. All the chairs here have cushions."

Then he piloted me through another room where paupers not so contented were similarly engaged, and said he

"This is called the *House of Commons* The chairs here have no cushions And this difference raises Cain between the two houses So you see, the work-house is just as bad as the outside world It's got its different classes who are always crabbing with each other And every time they crab, you can bet your braces that cushioned seats and *uncushioned* seats are at the bottom of it Class war in the grubber, Mac, can you beat it!"

We collected our bread and returned to the tramp ward Here, as I had hoped, the tables were laid for dinner, but not as I had expected Rather were they laid as I had imagined tramp ward tables were laid only in dreams And to make sure I wasn't dreaming I asked another pauper if he saw what I thought I saw

"You mean them there knives and forks, mate?"

"Yes Knives and forks!"

"And them there salt cellars and pepper boxes?"

"Yes Salt cellars and pepper boxes!"

"And them there blokes in white jackets wot's bringing in the doings?"

"Yes! Then I'm not dreaming?"

"No Under the new regulations—aw, shut up! Here's dinner!"

It was Nor did it belie its name For besides the allowance of cheese, bread-and-marge, and jacket potatoes, which was the most we ever received under the old régime, there was also a generous allowance of dog's body!

But to me it was just so much Dead Sea fruit The sudden and unheralded revelation of these luxurious innovations, one after another in such rapid-fire succession, had robbed my palate of all

taste As soon as I could, therefore, I left the table, rinsed out my mouth in the warm water which was the second and last course, and sought the sanctuary of the yard

After a while three other rogues joined me One was a Dundonian who had come over in a banana boat from the States after putting in nine years as a hobo Another was a Duiham man whose heels I was fated to clink elsewhere in far different surroundings And the third was a Lancashire lad with a Borstal cut about his jib

Into the woodshed we went, and in a dark corner we built a fire over which we drummed-up tea in a condensed milk can Then we rolled fags, and sat talking until unbelievable sounds proceeding from the casual ward interrupted and flabbergasted us Speechless and incredulous we sat listening

"Singing!" says the Borstal boy at last

"And a melodeon!" says I

Up we jumped Rushing across to the casual ward we slipped in through the back door

It was a prayer meeting!

In our absence the spike had been invaded by a swarm of mission folks—men, women, and young girls—bent on inoculating the tramps with the virus of their faith Nor had they been unsuccessful Two converts already knelt at the penitent form, three others were making their way towards it And, while the folks prayed aloud and hallelujahed, a wee melodieman obliged with a more than usually heartbreaking rendering of *Oh, Where is my Wandering Boy To-night?*

At the finish of this a bloke, togged up like an undertaker, gave his testimony He intoned like a clergyman and swayed about with his eyes shut, foaming at the mouth It was disgusting So beastly an exhibition of intemperance we sober-



living tramps had never seen For he was drunk, blind drunk, on religion Nay, were religion drink he would have long since been put away in a home for inebriates Yet he was the mission pastor, and an earnest worker in the cause of temperance

But it wasn't his intemperance that got our goat It was his too-often-reiterated assertion that he and his flock were our comrades, friends, and social equals So presumptuous a claim to kinship sent a ripple of wrath down the tramp ward We saw red Such effrontery was intolerable The idea of these taxpaying neurotics, addicted in all probability to aspirin, stomach soda, liver salt, bile beans, and other low habits of respectability, laying claim to equality with us untaxed and virile lords of the Toby!

He stopped just in time, however, and the porter, sensing mutiny and slaughter in our rising growls, tactfully showed him and his sheep the quickest way out

Soon after we were served with the last meal of the day bread-and-marge and tea Then, though it was still early evening, scarcely five o'clock, we were bundled off to bed to make room for the new arrivals already clamouring at the gate

The time that followed until Lights Out at nine o'clock was the maddest and merriest of the many mad and merry times I have spent in workhouse dormitories Beside it a carouse of the heroes in Valhalla would have appeared like a mothers' meeting It would have made a bacchanal of the gods on Olympus seem like a Band of Hope cookie-shine For it was a Nero-feast of fun It was a Lucullus-banquet of storytelling It was a Gargantuan gormandising of inextinguishable laughter

O you respectable people, great and many must your crimes be that such ambrosial nights are forever barred you!

O you rich people, what would you not give of your wealth of possession, if, for one night, one hour, one minute, you could laugh as care-free and as godlike as we who were paupers and possessionless did laugh that night !

O you—— But this O young business can be overworked Although, mind you, I could go on O younging you to some purpose and for considerably more paragraphs !

Thus, with sides sore with so much laughing, with throats hoarse with so much talking, and with minds dazzled into blankness with so much wit, humour, and imaginative inventiveness, we fall asleep And *sic transit gloria* Sunday

Next morning before six, while it is yet starbright night, the clicking on of the dormitory lights fetches us back to earth again For not only is that the signal that it is time for us to get up , it is also the signal that it is time for us to get out

And out we go With a meagre breakfast of tea and bread-and-marge in our stomachs, and a more meagre dinner of dry bread and nippy cheese in our pockets, out we go from the warm, comfortable spike, where there is at least a little work, into the cold, cheerless world, where there is none at all !

*A-doing of a starry* is the graphic idiom whereby the London Cockney expresses in slangy English what in dictionary English is going to take me paragraphs of sentences to express

The phrase, to make misuse of apt alliteration's hurtful help, is indicative of the state of strayed starvelings street-strolling beneath the stars It is

descriptive of the plight of the past-twelve pavement patrol plodding penniless beneath the planets In other words, it denotes the woe of weary waifs walking wakefully beneath the winking welkin

This being so, you will readily understand that to be a-doing of a starry in London after midnight is hardly a thing to be made a jest of over the nuts and wine It argues that the doer thereof is possessed of an abundant paucity of that for which the palm of man ever itcheth It argues that the said doer has exchanged his street-door key for the key of the street and been shown the door And it argues, if it argues at all, that, according to Law, he is liable to a rest and detention on the charge of being a rogue and vagabond found wandering without a visible bean for support and capable of giving an improper account of himself

To have the key of the street To be abroad in the streets at midnight, to be houseless, foodless, and penniless, to be dropping with fatigue yet always on the move, to be drunk with sleep yet never closing an eye, to be mindsick, heartsick, and soulsick, to be cold and wet and demented with suffering, to be all that, and more, is what is meant by the phrase to have the key of the street

London has often been called the City that Never Sleeps, but no greater falsehood was ever perpetrated Sleep it does, and that soundly, how very soundly only the weary night prowler knows For he walks, and the night seems never to pass nor the city to awaken It is the Vigil Dolorous The long adamantine miles of pavement flow under his tired feet without let or lull He must walk, and keep on walking Nor must he loiter, else the policeman will get him Neither must he curl up in a dark doorway out of the wind and rain, for then sleep

will instantly manacle him tight, and after that—the policeman again

He who has the key of the street must ever be on the alert. In the quieter streets he may allow his feet to shuffle, his shoulders to droop, sometimes even his eyes to close, but not for long. He enters a main thoroughfare, and sees an inspector and a sergeant coming towards him. On the instant up go his shoulders, out shoot his feet, and his eyes click open. Swaggering over much in a feigned gait he hurries past, looking the policemen suspiciously straight in the face.

“Believe me,” he seems to say, “I am not tired. My feet are not sore. My looks belie me. I am not what you suspect I am. I—I have a home to go to, and I am hurrying there now—whistling.” And the poor wretch puckers his lips in a tuneless whistle.

Possession of the key of the street teaches a man things that no book can ever teach. Doubtless the olive groves of Academe, no less than the shady colonnades of the Lyceum, were pleasant places to wander through and weave philosophies in, doubtless, too, they conduced not a little to the building up of those mundane theories at which for ages the world has so gaped and wondered, but if ever the Latter-Day Peripatetics find a recorder, the London streets at midnight will be discovered to have conduced even more to the building up of *their* theories, and will loom large in *their* philosophies.

As a matter of dull fact, however, there is no valid reason why people need walk the London streets at midnight without a bed, and bored. The only excuse for such eccentricity is ignorance of the thousands of charitable institutions which at once infest the metropolis and go far to explain why there are in London more Scotsmen than in the

whole of Edinburgh, more Welshmen than in the whole of Cardiff, and more Irishmen than in the whole of—Glasgow

Besides, even if our perpetrator of the stellary stunt should be too proud to warm his aristocratic digits at the frozen fires of these aforementioned charitable institutions, there are at least three places where he can go to without soiling his 'scutcheon or letting the roses fall from his chaplet. These three places of sanctuary are the classic, if not upholstered, benches of the Thames Embankment, the coffee-stained tables of Goodfare's coffee house in the piazza of Covent Garden, and last, the pews in the crypt of St. Martin-in-the-Fields at the top right-hand corner of Trafalgar Square

The first of these refuges, the Thames Embankment, sad to say, is not what it was. Its benches o' nights are so cluttered up with heavily disguised novelists and journalists seeking local colour and copy, and bribing each other to relate tales of their underworld experiences, that it is well nigh impossible for a legitimate rogue to find a place to park his flesh. The recently installed floodlighting, too, renders the Embankment unsuitable for *al fresco* earwalloping. Its white glare makes the fierce light that beats on thrones look like tenebrous gloom by comparison. Nevertheless, sitting on the Embankment is better than walking about. It saves the pavements from being too rapidly worn away. But more of the Embankment later.

The second refuge, Goodfare's, is all right, except that you must possess the price of a cup of coffee before you dare bow your head upon the tables and go into a clinch with Morpheus. It opens in the early hours, and you mustn't be found sitting waiting outside on the stoop before then. In fact, the big-hearted bobbies whose beat it is in make jolly sure

you don't by swilling a bucket of water over the doorstep and pavement in the piazza. Apart from that, though, Goodfare's is a safe refuge for the streetwalker on a winter's midnight, and you are let sleep there until the market opens.

The last refuge, the crypt below the church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, is the best. It is declared a sanctuary for the homeless round about midnight. Then, if you knock at the wicket at the right-hand side of the main door as you go up the famous steps, a kind-faced but firm-handed policewoman will open and ask when you slept there last. She does this merely to hear your accent, for she has a memory for accents, and will soon turn you away if she thinks you are becoming too regular in your church attendance. Then if you say you hae never been there afore in a' your days, she'll burst out with—"Anther Scotsman! Ma conscience, they're a' Scotsmen here the nicht! Come in, mon."

She leads the way down a flight of stone steps to the whitewashed crypt beneath the church, where one light burns. There the pews bear their snoring freight of homeless men, who lie curled up on the seats with small leather-covered hassocks under their heads and small rubber mats pillowing their haunches. And sometimes your guide finds it difficult to hunt you out a vacant place, but when she does she bids you good-night and leaves you among the snorers until six in the morning.

But if, from pigheadedness or some other personal defect, you, our prospective streetwalker, scorn to patronise any one of these three refuges, then all there is left for you to do is either to take a header-in off Waterloo Bridge and puncture the Thames, or give Shank's mare a free rein and perambulate the town.

After all, you won't be the only wakeful somnam-

bulist mooning around the metropolis after bedtime You will meet, and go out of your way to avoid, scores of other bleary-eyed listeners to the chimes at midnight You will see things in your wandering that should make you sorry that you have sight at all You will learn the true reason why such a lot of married men have so often to work overtime at the office You will fall to wondering how it is that policemen can wake up and come out from their sleeping places always just a minute or two before the sergeant makes his appearance—and you will come to the conclusion that it must be just habit and long practice that does it

You will walk until your swollen feet are burning, blistered pulses of pain You will walk until you imagine that you have been walking since eternity began, and that you are fated to keep on walking until eternity ends You will yearn with an intensity that you didn't think yourself capable of for just a seat in a quiet place where policemen never go, and you will search in vain for just a seat in a quiet place where policemen never go You will traverse interminable distances only to come back to your starting point to traverse them over again And you will learn the lie of London in a way that no conducted tour can ever teach

At the same time, you will have to con your frail craft between the Scylla and Charybdis of coffee stalls and night watchmen's cabins And these are the deuce To pass by either of these twinkling ports of comfort and cosiness on a wet and windy night, when even the very houses seem asleep, is to know the torture of Tantalus For it is superlatively maddening to have to drive past under bare poles, so to speak, and be unable through lack of harbour-dues to make their haven The coffee stalls especially

When the connoisseur in things nocturnal speaks

of coffee stalls, he invariably means London coffee stalls, for to him, outside of these, no others exist. And he is right. Say what you will, there is about a London coffee stall a something entirely lacking in any other kind of coffee stall—an atmosphere, an aura, I don't know what, but anyway it is a something unique in itself, and has to be experienced to be properly appreciated. For to stand, cup in hand, at a London coffee stall at midnight—which, of course, is three o'clock in the morning—between a Cockney cadger and an opera-hatted baronet, is an experience immeasurably removed from that of eating chicken sandwich, say, in a New York quick-lunch joint between a Bowery yegg and a Harlem hoodlum. Again, London coffee stalls, I repeat, are the lamps which the night moths flutter round, and by night moths you know that I mean the miseries, the wretched, the homeless waifs and starvelings that come out with the dusk and go in with the dawn, and for whom there is the walk, walk, walking of the pavements and this ecstatic torture. Because torture it is. To stand afar off in the rain, with empty pockets and an emptier stomach, devouring—but only with the eyes—the long festoons of juicy looking saveloys, the toppling piles of thick meat sandwiches, the stacked heaps of tea-cakes, the steaming cups of tea, the fragrant mugs of piping hot coffee, and, worst and most unbearable of all, to watch the happy customers carelessly, and seemingly indifferently, consuming these! And yet so very little separates the starveling from his world's desire. Tea three ha'pence, bread a ha'penny, saveloy three ha'pence. Can you appreciate it? To be roasting, empty-pocketed, on Hell's griddle, and Heaven procurable for thruppence-ha'penny! O you poor devil of a rich man, you gourmet, you educated ignoramus, with your goose-liver pies and



your caviare, what do *you* know of gastronomical delight? Nothing! Why, the veriest waif who wolfs a charity crust at a coffee stall reaches heights of stomachic bliss that you have never even dreamed of!

Earlier in the night, too, there are likewise those exasperating ever-ready sausage restaurants, where happy aliens stand plying their pleasant trade in the windows under the gaze of the passers-by. That is fiendish. Not all the tortures of the Inquisition—I mean the Means Test—can equal that. To stand with one's nose squashed shapelessly against the steamed panes and watch onions bubbling, steaks sizzling, mash browning, sausages—oh, lord! Listen hasn't it often been conjectured what song it was the Sirens sang? Yes? Well, I know for sure. They didn't sing any song. No. What these naughty nudes did was just to lie low and make frying noises like an Italian ever-ready sausage restaurant!

In all seriousness, however, it is an eerie business to be abroad and alone in the quieter streets and squares of London between the hours of two and four. For then, at that zero time, in the dead vast and middle of the night when life's pendulum swings slowest, the awful presence of the sleeping millions is borne in upon the wanderer with truly terrifying effect. Then is his feeling of aloneness made manifest and accentuated, a feeling of aloneness to which the most desert of wildernesses can never hope to give rise.

Although I have wandered alone at a like hour amid the Coolin Hills in Skye, and sat neighbourless under the moon in the gloom of Glen Ogle, yet the feeling of aloneness I experienced then was of a quality more pleasing, and widely different from that experienced in the greatest city of the world.

when its tired millions are fast asleep, and all its mighty heart is lying still

So that to be a-doing of a starry, you see, implies some isolation, more tribulation, and a darned sight too much perambulation. It puts young men on their mettle, and old men in their graves. It wears one's body down, and one's boots up. It compensates astronomically for what it falls short of gastronomically. It is a game in which the dice is loaded against you from the start, a game in which the cards are stacked from the beginning. And play you good or bad, square or crooked, the banker will knock spots off you at every deal, and finish up his dirty work by handing you the pip.

## XIII

## THE EMBANKMENT

At one end of its 'curved perspective there is an Abbey where kings are crowned and where heroes sleep, at the other end is the metropolitan Bridge of Sighs where suicides leap off. Behind it, gorgeous hotels throw from their storeyed windows a blaze of moneyed life, before it, the darkling waters of the Thames swirl down to the sea, bearing, sometimes, a burden of penniless death.

It follows the sweeping bend of the bank from Blackfriars to Westminster, and a long row of benches facing the river line its kerb. The seats of these, each shiny with use, are divided into two by wrought-iron arm-rests, so that each division can hold two people comfortably, three uncomfortably, and four not at all.

Along the entire length of this, the Victoria Embankment, to give it its proper name, runs a breast-high parapet of granite, and on top of this are globed lamps supported on metal standards

placed equidistant from one another Two goggle-eyed dolphins with their tails artistically entwined about the base of each standard eternally gasp for breath in the foggy air, and the bearded face of Neptune—oi it may be Father Thames himself—forever looks out from under the twain

I have only to close my eyes to see it all again the Via Dolorosa that is this Embankment And on the dark screen of my shut eyelids the cinematograph of memory throws pictured remembrances of its dolorous way of nights innumerable spent upon its benches, of faces unnumbered seen along its length, of dark thoughts given way to, leaning on its parapet; of strange egos walked with companionly on its pavement, of stranger life-histories listened to, and shuddered at, under its plane trees, of untellable sights witnessed in the wan rays of its dolphin lights, of its agony, of its bitterness, of all the squalid and unmitigated wretchedness for which it stands

Fully a mile and a quarter in length, from Thorneycroft's Boadicea at the Westminster Bridge end to what used to be the Wakefield rifle range at the Blackfriars Bridge end, is this storied Embankment Two thousand six hundred paces! I know Haven't I counted them often enough in my midnight patrollings? Haven't they become seared into my brain from reiterated and hysterical repetition on the night wind? Two thousand six hundred paces! And of its dolphin lights there are no less than threescore and seven I used to count them Not to woo sleep, but to woo wakefulness Not out of curiosity as to their number, but lest I should drop down dead asleep in my tracks

But that only happened when the Embankment benches bore their full complement of human souls about a hundred all told At other times the trouble

was to woo oblivion For one must indeed be weary before blessed sleep will come to one's eyelids there The benches are so hard The river winds are so cold The pangs of hunger, remorse, and despair are so razor-keen Then always is there the policeman Up he comes with his all-revealing torch, and "How're you fixed?" he demands, prodding you in the ribs And you've got to rouse up and shake yourself to show him that you are not dead—yet

For it is against the Law to die on the Embankment You mustn't sleep yourself dead, there Dear me, no It's a crime And only the fit are let sleep on its benches If you are very old or very young the policeman soon shifts you "Come, dad," he says to the aged derelict, "this is no place for you You'll have to find somewhere else" While to the over-young waif he says, "Hello, what's the game? You can't sleep here, my lad Get a move on Don't let me catch you sitting there a second time" And he continues his beat

Strangely enough, I myself have never been shifted Somehow the policemen have always let me alone I remember one night sitting on a bench, when a typical old Darby and Joan came up and sat down beside me And they weren't so ragged or down-and-out looking either On the contrary, they struck me as being clean and tidy to a degree seldom encountered in Avernus And the old woman, a motherly creature, took a bundle of newspapers out of her doroathy and spread them on the cold hard seat as carefully and painstakingly as though she were spreading a couch of fine linen And when all was ready she sat down on it close to her old man, and, leaning her white head confidingly on his shoulder, composed her tired limbs for sleep

But it was not to be The dear old Dutch hadn't closed her eyes five minutes when up comes the

policeman, and "You can't sleep here," he says, flashing his light on the abashed old couple. And that was all. He hadn't to say one word more. For Joan just looked apologetically at Darby, and without so much as a protesting glance at the thing in blue they rose obediently from the bench, and together, arm in arm, toddled off into the shadows.

"Why don't you shift me?" I asked the policeman, there and then, for somehow I felt as though I had stolen a march on the old couple. Surely I was fitter to be shifted than they were? But the policeman's answer enlightened me.

"You can stand the racket," he explained, "better than they can. And besides"—here he glanced me over appraisingly—"you belong here. You fit in. Whereas that old pair——" and he gesticulated significantly into the darkness.

Visit the Embankment any night after eleven o'clock and you will learn what manner of men and women occupy those benches of misery. Old ragged down-and-outs, young ragged down-and-outs, middle-aged ragged down-and-outs—these, male and female, are the typical boarders of this world-famous Hotel d'Embankment, and constitute one of London's most edifying sights.

Round about midnight it is not uncommon to see a taxi draw up at the riverside kerb and pour out of its door a glittering bevy of befurred and bescented womanhood with a monocled and opera-hatted escort in their giggling wake. Along the pavement of the Embankment they trip, at a hygienic distance from the lousy waifs dosing it out on the benches, and scan from the corners of their lovely eyes such sights as they may see. With barely suppressed *ohs* and *look heres*, and agitated pointings, these ghoulish pleasure-seekers spend a thoroughly enjoyable time gloating over the highly humorous spec-

tacle of homeless human beings, who were once men and women, squirming there as on Hell's hotplate bedless, prideless, and penniless. Sometimes a wakeful cadger touches his hat to these visitors, and a coin is thrown to him as a spittle is thrown to a spittoon.

But not all of the sightseers are ghouls. By benchers in the long hours before dawn, tales are told of muffled forms that passed along from seat to seat and left in the nerveless grasp of the amazed and incredulous recipients—not copper money, nor silver money, but money that crackled!

One summer night not many years ago there stole along from bench to bench two slight figures who put into the hands and slipped into the pockets of those who sat shivering there, minted sympathy. These figures were those of two old London boys who had made good. One hailed from Stepney, the other from Kennington. And their identity? Thomas Burke and Charlie Chaplin.

Perhaps you may think that only two or three, or at the most maybe half a dozen, down-and-outs inhabit the benches at night. But it is quite otherwise. Very rarely can one find a bench on which nobody is sitting, although the Church Army patrolmen do their best to thin the ranks. Once, at two o'clock of a winter's morning, I walked along the whole stretch of the Embankment, from Scotland Yard to Blackfriars Bridge, and every seat on every bench was crowded out, there was standing room only. And I had to wait for more than an hour before a young girl of the streets vacating her narrow strip of bench rewarded my patience.

As the benches stand on the extreme edge of the kerb with their backs towards the roadway, it is nerve-shattering to sit on them any length of time. The L C C trams, you see, run immediately behind,

scarcely more than a foot away, and the grinding jar and rattle of the wheels as they rush and rumble along the rails are well nigh unbearable

Speaking of the trams, however, reminds me of a night when, dejected and famishing, I was sitting on one of the seats I had scarcely had a bite of food for days, and was pretty lightheaded Also, like the majority of the waifs who inhabit the Embankment, I was talking to myself

"I wish to heaven it would rain down manna," I was saying, "I could be doing with some"

And thereupon happened the miracle Out of the night sky, like a bolt from the blue, came hurtling on to my lap the stuff of my desire manna, in the shape of a bundle of salmon sandwiches!

It appeared a miracle to me, sure enough, but to the tram conductor who had brought it about I suppose it was merely an easy means of getting rid of some superfluous lunch Anyhow, if manna tasted anything like yon, then I don't see what the Children of Israel had to grumble about It looked like salmon sandwiches all right, but, O ye gods! it went down like ambrosia

The seats are cruelly hard, and make beds of little ease You really can't rest on them You can only doze, and curse, and fall into a troubled dog-nap now and again But the hardness of the benches is nothing compared with the cold That is a demon You can't escape it No matter how cunningly you arrange your coat around you, the river wind will search out an opening and lacerate you to the marrow And heaven help you if you haven't got a coat

The homeless waifs sit there in all kinds of attitudes of misery and dejection, cursing bitterly at the cold and the rain, and at the lack of upholstery beneath their bones Some crouch with their thinly

clad knees drawn up to their chin, and their head bent down on them. Some sit sideways on the benches with their arms crossing their breast and shielding the face. Others, especially women, fling capes and coats over their head and shoulders and sleep curled up on the seat. But the usual way is to sit square up, hands thrust deep into pockets, head drawn down between the hunched shoulders, with the knees and thighs pressed tightly together, making the body as small as possible so as to present less surface to the icy winds that rush in over the low parapet, summer as well as winter.

So, when Big Ben crashes out the wake o' clock hour and the policeman rouses you with his brusque "Come along, now, it's time to get a move on!" it is with stiff bones, shivering frame, and dully aching head that you tear yourself away from your travesty of a bed, and reel off in a sleep-drunken stupor to wherever you know you can beg, borrow, or steal a bite of breakfast.

Ah, those hopeless dawns. How well do I remember them. How often have I gazed up through the murk of the morning to the legend carved beneath the Eagle's wings *Per ardua ad astra*. And how often have I wondered whether, in my case, it would ever come true, whether, through rough ways, I would ever reach the stars.

If the Embankment could only speak, if its pavement, its benches, its lights, and its parapet could only speak, what tales they could tell! What tales of the pavement of the thousands and tens of thousands of weary feet that have worn hollow its flags, freighted with weariness enough to sink the world! Of the benches of the huddled figures that have nightly shivered there, each undergoing a Gethsemane! Of the dolphin lights of the pinched faces, and the rags, and the misery they



have shone upon! And of the parapet Ah, the cold granite parapet what tales it could tell of leaning elbows, of fascinated eyes gazing down too fixedly on the darkling waters, of terrible decisions arrived at in the night watches!

I've met all sorts and conditions of men on the Embankment rich men who had fallen, poor men who could never rise, and nondescript betweenities Some sickened me, others interested me

I remember one night watching a young Hindu student (it's curious, but Hindu students seem to haunt me) in the shadow of Cleopatra's Needle He was leaning on the parapet with his head between his hands, groaning aloud in an agony pitiable to behold His dark face was distorted with grief and his slim body writhed as though under the lash Then an old draggle-tail of a woman came along—a regular Doll Tearsheet—and, seeing his condition, she stopped and timidly began talking to him And for fully half an hour she continued talking What she said I couldn't hear, but, anyway, it calmed the young student so that he shook hands with her and departed a different man And ever since it has always been a great wonder to me what that old Cockney draggle-tail of a woman could have had to say to that cultured gentleman of Ind East may be East, and West may be West, but there are times, I think, when the twain do meet That night was one of them

But the Embankment has met its doom Its hey-day is past Its mysterious shadows are nearly all dispelled For, as I have said, great lamps are now slung aloft along its crescent way, flooding it with light White brilliance displaces its darkness Its night is turned into day And all the shades that haunted it all the waifs, all the derelicts, all the flotsam and jetsam of human drift that haunted its

riverside sanctuary after midnight—all these, or nearly all, have fled its brilliance

No more can it be called the Via Dolorosa, but in place thereof the Great White Way And dimmed forever are its dolphin lights For the old order changeth, yielding place to new, and what are the derelicts that they should kick against the pricks? Trust them, they will have found another place, perhaps a better place, let us hope a warmer place, but it won't be the Embankment That, now, is become but a memory

## XIV

## GETTING ARRESTED

ALL day long I had been trying hard to get myself arrested, and all day long I had signally failed But now, I had every reason to hope, before many minutes were passed my purpose would be achieved and the nick would know me

You see, I was in a quandary, in the deuce of a quandary, and imprisonment seemed the only way out Wherefore I sought to get myself arrested

But as it may strike you who read this that the quandary which called for such drastic remedy must have been no ordinary one, I shall reveal to you its exact nature It was this how could I, who had absolutely nothing to exist on, continue to exist?

I was down and out and at the end of my tether I had no work, no money, no food, no lodging, while the clothes I stood up in would have brought the blush of shame to the turnip cheeks of any self-respecting scarecrow Hence, being but lately returned from a 3000 mile tramp through England and Wales, and being obsessed with the idea of getting into some place where I could rest for a time and recuperate, and where the board, lodging,

and attendance would be strictly gratuitous, I had thought that by getting myself arrested I should thus kill two birds with one stone

Though the idea was perfectly good, yet certain risks attached to its execution

Within the exact meaning of the Law I already was a *rogue and vagabond*, an *idle and disorderly person*, and an *incorrigible rogue*. Moreover, previous to setting out on my tramp I had been arrested for begging, and I had been arrested again on a similar charge after setting out. And on each of these occasions the magistrate had warned me that my next appearance at the bar would be followed by consequences other than one night spent in the comfortable cells. Still, needs must when the devil drives. I must walk warily, that was all.

All day, therefore, I had been trying hard to get myself arrested. And if the policemen who patrolled the particular London suburb which I had chosen as the scene of my nefarious operations had been any way up to snuff, my appearance alone would have done the trick. For I was dressed in a coat of rusty black, my neck was completely muffled in a scarf also of rusty black, so that no shirt showed, and, while the dilapidated condition of my hat spoke only too eloquently of 3000 miles exposure to English weather, my boots spilled the beans with a decided vengeance.

My plan was this. I would let a policeman see me go up to a door and beg, forthwith he would take me into custody, I would tell the beak about my previous arrests, and I would be supplied, free, gratis, and for nothing, with board, lodging, and attendance for a considerable time to come.

Simple, wasn't it?

Yes, but it didn't quite work out so simple. For hours I prowled about the tree-lined suburban

terraces and drives, and not one policeman could I spy. They were conspicuous by their absence. So I decided to seek pastures new.

Scarcely had I entered a more thickly populated area, though, when something told me that at last I was being followed. Thank heaven! But I didn't turn round. Instead, I took from my pocket a tiny mirror, fitted this into my palm, and, raising my hand as though to adjust my hat brim, took a good long look up the road behind.

I was right in my surmise. A couple of splits, two blinking bloodhounds of the blooming Law, were hot on my trail!

Still without turning round, I walked slowly along looking for a suitable house to beg at. This I soon found. Pushing open the gate I went up to the front door, and rang the bell. Nobody answered. I rang again, but with the same result. Dash it all! However, I waited some time longer, then came away. But I had just banged the gate behind me when I heard the front door being opened and shut again. But I didn't bother to turn back. I entered at another gate and rang the bell of another front door.

My luck was out, however, nobody answered, the house was as silent as the grave. So I turned to go away—and walked straight into the arms of the two plain-clothes men who had silently followed me in through the gate and up the path.

"Excuse me," says one, "I'm a police officer. I want to know what you've been visiting these houses for. We've had you under observation, you know."

"I was begging," says I.

"But you didn't knock at the doors," returns the split. "We didn't see you. Have you knocked at this one?"

"Yes, but there's nobody in."

"We'll soon see about that!" says he, and, lifting the knocker, gave three mighty double knocks. The door opened!

"Did this man knock at your door, madam?" asked the 'tec of the lady who appeared.

"He may have knocked," said she, doubtfully, looking scared. "But I didn't hear him or I should have opened. You see——"

"You didn't hear him knock," he cuts in, "and we didn't see him knock. So——"

"But I rang the bell!" I says hotly.

"——So you're coming along with me."

"But I've done nothing!" I protested, alarmed at the sinister turn things had taken. "What am I charged with?"

"You are charged," answered the sleuth, "as a suspected person, found loitering with intent to commit a felony!"

I was completely flabbergasted at this. Designedly suspicious though my actions had been, yet I had never dreamed that they could, or would, be misconstrued in this terrible fashion. Still, the more I considered them from the detective's point of view the more I had to admit that not only was the charge a perfectly just one, but that it was the only one they could bring against me. Circumstances had beaten me, that was all. But it meant that instead of being dealt with merely as a public nuisance I should now be dealt with—as a public menace!

Nay, it meant more even than that. It meant that instead of my revealing to the police my former exploits, I should now have to endeavour all I knew not to reveal them. And to do this I must lie like an angler. But—and here was the rub—throughout all my travels I had religiously kept a diary in which, written in detail day by day, was entered every little thing I had done, honest and dishonest! How-

ever, I should have to risk that Ten to one they wouldn't be able to read it For, with just such a contingency in view, I had had the foresight to write my diary not in English, but in French And on each of the two former occasions on which I had been arrested, that diary proved a sore blow to the vanity of the illiterate policemen who searched me

As we threaded our way through the quieter streets towards the local nick one of the dees asked me my name, and I told him—fictitiously

“Ever been in custody before, chum?” enquired his mate in a more humane manner

“Me!” I cried, in mock indignation “What do you take me for? A habitual criminal? I tell you I was begging!”

“Then if you were begging,” put in the other ‘tec, “why did you come away from the first door just as the woman came to open it?”

“And if you were begging,” added the other, “why didn’t you knock at the doors, chum?”

“But, good heavens!” I cried, “I did knock—or ring rather—at the blinking doors, but the fools didn’t hear me!”

“They heard *me* all right,” was the answer to that, so I shut up in disgust

Under the novelty of my situation, though, this disgust soon evaporated Before long I even began to find it difficult to keep my face straight For so professionally stern were the faces of my escort that the people whom we met must have imagined me to be some criminal master-mind who, after a long chase and a stern, across three continents, had been at last brought to book by these untiring sleuth-hounds of the Law! Nay, I proved this to be so When passing a street navvy who had stopped work to gaze openmouthed at us, I deliberately looked him full in the face—and winked

And so very violent did he start with horror and turn away that I'm positive he dislocated some essential part of his anatomy

But I didn't laugh long No Suddenly one of the 'tecs asked of the other,

"*Quelle heure est-il ?*"

"*Il est trois heures,*" replied the other

And on that my blood turned to ice It had never dawned upon me that I might fall into the hands of detectives who could speak a language other than their own It fairly put the wind up me Fortunately, however, my consternation was short-lived Because when I came to size up the two splits on either side of me I concluded that their joint linguistic ability, profound though it might be, would still be entirely unequal to the task of elucidating my diary

Although written in French, the entries therein were set down in a manner so short-handed as to appear nonsensical to readers not supplied with the key Moreover, where at times my French had failed me I had substituted German, and when that too had refused to be remembered, I had used instead English words written in German script. Finally, I understood human nature sufficiently well to know that at the first word the splits came across which they couldn't translate, they would immediately close the diary in embarrassment They belonged, I could see, to the type that are so ignorant as actually to feel ashamed of being ignorant

When at length we reached the police station, things turned out precisely like this After being questioned and formally charged, and after I had formally objected to having a record of my fingerprints taken and had signed the form for bail, I was searched, and my incriminating diary, along with

other papers, was instantly pounced upon and perused—and almost immediately handed back to me by an embarrassed 'tec

"That's all right," says he, avoiding my eye, "we won't want them They're private papers You keep them"

And you may be sure I made all haste to put them away in the deepest and darkest pocket I possessed.

Pipe, matches, razor, scarf, and other forbidden articles were taken from me, each item laboriously entered on the charge sheet, and all put aside to be used as evidence against me I could hardly believe it I nearly crowed with delight The obtuseness of the police was staggering The things that didn't matter were retained, while those that mattered most of all diary, notes, letters, etc —were returned to me!

Following this, the turnkey locked me in a white-tiled cell, and at tea-time handed in through a hole in the door some bread and butter and a pint pot of tea real tea, *sergeant-major's* tea, so that I soon was in the seventh heaven Then I rang the emergency bell and asked for a paper to read And on receiving this I rang again and asked for a match to light the cigarette I had smuggled in Smoking was strictly prohibited, of course, but the turnkey, like nearly all turnkeys, was humane (or, as the Law would say, corrupt) and readily obliged So there on my plank bed I lolled luxuriously, reading, smoking, and filling in crossword puzzles, as happy as a sandboy

My plan had succeeded! I had board, lodging, and attendance for an indefinite time to come—and there was nothing to pay!

Before bedtime, though, I was taken out of the cell and put into a stuffy little ante-room, where, on a chair placed close to the fire, and before an audi-



ence of some half dozen blokes, I was fairly put through it

For fully an hour I was questioned and cross-questioned, sheet after sheet of foolscap being filled with my tale. For in self-defence I had to tell a tale. In an unguarded moment, you are to know, I had said that I had left home in 1919, so, from then right up to that present moment I had to relate in minutest detail, day after day, month after month, year after year, everything I had done!

Believe me, it was warm work. Composing poetry wasn't in it. What with the heat of the coal fire and the heat of my creative fire I was soon in a fine sweat. But I took that roomful of detectives all over Great Britain with me. From Aberdeen to Dover, from Wales to the Wash, village by village, town by town, city by city, I led them on a nine years' fictitious wander-trail. And they listened, marvelling. But when I finished I returned sorrowfully to my plank bed. For there was none in that company to appreciate my performance. All thought it was the truth!

Early next morning I was wakened, allowed to wash, and more bread and butter and tea was administered through the hole in the door. Then in company with the two polyglot splits of yesternight I rode on 'bus-top to the police court. But before that, I should like to mention, the more humane of the two bought a packet of cigarettes and gave me some, he himself being a pipe-smoker.

"John Thingmy!" announced the magistrate in due course, and the mills of the Law began to grind—with me in between them, and, while I assumed a Sydney Carton pose at the bar, the relentless sleuth, who was the cause of all this fuss, entered the witness-box. He took up a book in his left hand, stared sheepishly into space, and began

reciting something he obviously knew by heart, some legal rigmarole, I supposed, for it was absolutely unintelligible, and nobody listened. Even the magistrate himself had turned a deaf ear and was lightly chatting to a colleague seated beside him. Then a light burst in upon me. By heaven, the 'tec was taking the oath—the oath which I in my innocence had always supposed the Law regarded as something sacred!

The charge was next read out, and I pleaded guilty. Then while the detective gave evidence—with a not very nice look on his face—the clerk took it down word for word. And the sole, heavily begoggled reporter in the press seats yawned till his jaws cracked. And me? I stood nervously grasping the bar, feeling as though it were an electrified rod I was grasping.

"It was at thirty-seven minutes past two," began the sleuth, "that the prisoner first came under our observation. His looks were suspicious so we decided to follow him. He walked very slowly along the main road, stopping now and then to take stock of the shop windows——" Here he paused till the clerk wrote that down.

Oh, the warped mind, the crooked reasoning! I was walking slowly because my boots were soleless and my feet all cut and raw. And I stopped at shop windows in order to rest my feet, not to 'take stock' criminally!

"Yes?" said the clerk, and the narrator continued.

"——Then the prisoner turned into a side street and we continued to follow. And as he walked slowly along he kept looking up at the windows in a highly suspicious manner. Then he pulled his hat over his eyes, went up to a front door, peered through the glass panels, and adopted a listening attitude——"

There was circumstantial evidence for you! I didn't pull my hat over my eyes. What I did was to raise a hand, with a mirror in it, to my hat brim, and so look behind me without turning round. And I couldn't have peered through the glass panel—because the glass was opaque! And is it not the most natural thing in the world, on knocking at a door, to 'adopt a listening attitude'? Don't we all?

"——Then when he heard someone coming to the door he hurried away from the house, and going up to another door acted in the same suspicious manner——"

Oh, the villain! I didn't hurry away because I heard someone coming to the door. I had rung the bell, had waited in vain for an answer, and it was only when outside the front gate that I heard someone at the door!

"——Then I went up to the prisoner and asked him what he was doing. He said he was begging. So I knocked at the door and asked the lady who opened if the prisoner had knocked. But she said no. So, as we hadn't seen him knock, I took him into custody."

"Did you search the prisoner?" demanded the magistrate, between whose eyes and mine a game of hide-and-seek had been going on.

"Yes, sir," answered the sleuth. And, with no mention of my diary or private papers, he proceeded to read out the list: pipe, matches, razor, scarf, knife, etc.

"It's a combination knife," he explained, significantly, holding it up for all the court to see, "*and the big blade is broken off at the tip*."

Oh, cunning, cunning! You see, he meant to imply that the tip had been broken off burglariously forcing back window catches or springing locks!

And the truth ? The truth was that I had found the knife, the combination knife, some time back on the road, and had broken the tip of the big blade off while trying to extract hurtful nails from my boots !

“ ‘As the prisoner ’ad any previous convictions ? ’ ” the magistrate next asked

“ It’s uncertain, sir,” said the sleuth, “ but we are making enquiries ”

“ Very well,” decided the magistrate “ The prisoner is remanded for seven days ”

Later, as we left the court, I turned to the sleuth and asked

“ And where do I go now ? ”

And he answered

“ To prison, chum ”

WHEN the two detectives and I left the court, we crossed the street and entered the police station opposite, where I was locked in a cell, given bread and butter and tea for my midday meal, and left to kick my heels until the time should come for me to go to prison

At long last that time came But instead of being hurtled through the streets in a Black Maria, as on the occasion of my first arrest, I, along with another prisoner, merely walked to the nearest railway station escorted by two very jovial bobbies

This other prisoner was an Australian, and one of the most egotistical blokes I’ve ever met Indeed, so very egotistical was he that even such a persistent exploiter of the ego as I couldn’t teach him anything And as he walked up and down the

fireless waiting-room talking nineteen to the dozen he would allow no one to get a word in edgeways So we three others just sat winking at one another and smoking his most excellent cigarettes

Then we boarded a train And after quite a long ride in a compartment along with a timorous clergyman we alighted at another station, and before we knew what was happening we were bowling along a busy thoroughfare in a taxi

Strangely enough, these sudden changes occasioned me no surprise Rather they made me smile, so that I began to wonder at myself For here was I, a Law-breaker, in company with another Law-breaker, calmly walking between two policemen through streets for all to see, waiting in waiting-rooms where I was the cynosure of all eyes riding in trains with timorous clergymen who regarded me with scantily veiled horror in their glances, chatting pleasantly with my companions, and laughing wholeheartedly at their jokes, smoking an Australian crook's cigarettes, bowling along in taxi-cabs through busy thoroughfares on my way to spend seven days in prison, and yet, I say, I was taking it all as a matter of course Or rather, I was looking on as though these things were everyday affairs happening to a stranger And they so smacked of the unreal, too, that time and again I thought I must be dreaming

If I was dreaming, though, then the lofty walls and ponderous double doors of the prison—Brixton Prison—which eventually confronted us, were the most substantial dream stuff I had ever knocked up against And the clash of the wicket shutting behind us—that, too, was not at all dream-like Yet neither did it cause me to shudder For, being an ordinary human being and not a puppet in a novel, I was too intensely interested, too busy

employing my eyes, to toe the line of fictional behaviour and do the shuddering act

After our escort had delivered us up at the gatehouse, they wished us the best of luck and went away. Thereupon a gentlemanly warder—every warder, I soon discovered, was gentlemanly—asked our name, age, and religion (if any), and so booked us in. Then the still-talking Aussie and I, together with a third prisoner charged with stealing cigarettes, were politely conducted along several echoing corridors and ushered into a large room.

Here another gentleman in blue similarly asked our name, age, and religion (if any), and so booked us in a second time. Finally, he locked us into tiny one-man cubicles ranged round the room, and there left us to ruminate.

Half an hour passed, then, our doors being unlocked, a supper consisting of a pint of hot cocoa and as many little loaves of prison bread as we could devour was the next item on the programme. Afterwards—well, we ruminated for a further spell. Then one by one, for by this time our number was grown to nearly a score, we were let out of our cubicles and taken into the examination room to be scientifically searched, stripped, and weighed, and where our name, age, and religion (if any) were again requested of us. And that, ye gods and little fishes, made the third booking-in!

Afterwards a hot bath was given us, along with the advice to scrub and scrub hard. Then we dressed. And although the majority snobbishly chose to wear their own clothes, I decided to accept the kit of prison garb which was offered me. For how many men can boast that they once wore prison duds? Very few. Well, I wanted to belong to that few. So, thrilling the while, I donned the garb of shame with a rare delight.

It consisted of a complete suit of underwear that an Arctic explorer might have envied; a blue-striped shirt of stylish workhouse cut, faded white trousers, a blue monkey-jacket with a cavernous breast pocket, a blue waistcoat of Falstaffian girth, thick socks, strong shoes, a handkerchief nearly as big as a blanket (which I used as a belt in the sinister absence of braces, for this last useful article is not supplied—it makes too effective a noose), and lastly, I was given a new toothbrush. Yes. Shades of John Howard and Mrs Fry, I was given a new toothbrush!

Thus clothed I was again locked into a cubicle—this time with an Arnold Bennet for company. But I wasn't let read long. As soon as the last of our squad was bathed and booted we were told to prepare for the doctor. So we queued up. But the medical examination that followed could hardly be called an ordeal. It was farcical. All that we did was to toe up to a line chalked on the floor, let our trousers drop, turn our head to the left—and give our name, age, and religion (if any).

By thunder, I was getting fed up with all these bookings-in. They were beginning to weigh me down heavier than chains.

As soon as the doctor had finished his exhaustive examination of us we were each given a pillow-case containing our cell kit. (Good heavens, would they never stop giving us things!) This included a hair-brush and comb, a face-towel, a nightshirt, two bed-sheets, a tablecloth, and a pair of heelless carpet slippers.

Why, the whole thing was a howling scandal! Here were we, wastrels and crooks, being housed and furnished like belted earls, while in the outside world want and famine ran riot amongst the straight-livers and the toilers!

Needless to say, I took everything that was given me and said nothing. For the Scots blood within me was singing all the time. "Naething to pay! Naething to pay!" And it needed all my self-control to curb an impish desire to slosh the nearest warder over the head with my cell kit, merely for the fun of the thing, and start a general pillow-fight in celebration of my success in winning a week's board and lodging without having to pay for it.

As receipt for the cell kit, my name, age, and religion (if any) were again taken from me, and in their place I was given a little cloth tab having a buttonhole at either end, with a number—B3/29—stencilled in the middle. And after each of us had buttoned his tab to his jacket the warder lined us up to see that everyone had everything. Then, unlocking an iron door, he herded us down a long dim corridor that echoed hollowly to our tread, to a similar door at the far end. And through this we entered into the great hall of cells.

Have you ever visited the Aquarium at the Zoo? Well, this great hall of cells was like that—filled with a most mysterious twilight that wrapped one about as with the very cloak of romance itself.

It was a long, narrow, lofty hall paved with stone flags, and ranged round with three tiers of cells, of which the upper two were reached by climbing a slight iron staircase in the middle of the hall. Also, flanking the door of each of the hundred and thirty-two cells that this particular hall contained, an incandescent mantle was burning brightly in a square, whitewashed, wall-deep recess, and sending its light through a semi-opaque piece of glass to the prisoner within.

Near the door by which we had entered stood a littered desk with a warder at it, and a long table piled high with books. And here we were again



booked-in Then, being each given an armful of religious literature Bible, Prayer Book, etc , also a vacant library form and a cell identification card, we were at last led off to our respective cells But I was an unconscionable time a-getting to mine It was on the top landing , so, between having both hands and arms full of stuff, and having to stop often to hitch up my trousers, from which the handkerchief with which I had belted them had worked itself loose, my progress up the iron staircase was the deuce of a business

Then, the humour of the thing suddenly striking me, I began to laugh And I laughed so hard that on arriving outside my cell door I was so weak and helpless that I simply let everything drop, breeks and all, and leant back against the wall in a kink of silent laughter, the tears streaming down my cheeks. To crown all, just at that up comes the warder, and says he, kindly leading me in to a chair

"Don't take it so much to heart, Twenty-nine Just get your bed down and go to sleep, and you'll feel all the better in the morning It's not such a bad place after all Cheer up, old man Good-night!"

Believe me, it was some time after that solicitous warder had departed, locking the door behind him, that I recovered from my ill-placed fit of laughter sufficiently to sit up and take stock of things

What I saw astonished me in no small degree Although I had never in my life before been inside a prison cell, yet, even so, any ideas I may have had on the subject of cellular decoration suffered a rude dissolution And as you, too, may possibly be labouring under similar delusions, I shall at once hasten to describe the interior furnishings, fixings, and general upholstery that obtain in a prison cell in this twentieth century of Christian civilisation.

Picture to yourself a dark, noisome den of a place

built of roughly hewn blocks of stone, discoloured and glistening with damp, and, high up in the wall, a tiny aperture heavily guarded with iron bars, letting in as little air and light as it lets out foul atmosphere and obscurity. And picture likewise an uneven earthen floor having here and there stagnant pools of rainwater wherein rats and other creatures squirm in their slime. Lastly, picture a scanty heap of putrid straw raked up into one corner to serve the poor, shivering, half-starved, vermin-ridden wretch of a prisoner as a bed of pain by night and a torture rack by day.

Well, my cell was the exact opposite of that.

So much so, indeed, was it, that I had to rub my eyes to make sure they were seeing right. And even then I could hardly accept their evidence. For if this was a prison cell, I argued, then I, my lord and gentlemen of the jury, was the Grand Lama of Thibet, with knobs on!

The cell was no cell. Rather was it a furnished apartment for a single gentleman. In the first place, the walls were distempered a pleasing shade of green halfway up all round, finishing off with a neat black border, while the upper halves, including the ceiling, shone immaculate in whitewash. Secondly, the floor was not of earth but of wood, and scrubbed so clean and white that one could have eaten food off it with impunity. And lastly, the window was deep and wide, with an adjustable ventilator, and fitted with panes of clear glass. And although strong, flat, horizontal bars of iron guarded it on the outside, yet these were so fixed at an angle that one saw only their thinnest dimension.

The cell was large and roomy, and contained all of a bedroom's necessities. Thus, in the right-hand corner beside the door stood a triangular washstand,

with the usual basin, ewer, soap, soap-dish, tumbler, etc. Then, on the left-hand side of the door, which, by the way, was pierced by a glass-fitted observation peephole, a thick wooden bracket stuck out from the wall to serve as table or reading desk. And on this were placed an enamelled tin plate, a tin butter-spreader like a flattened-out shoehorn, a metal spoon, a pint mug or beaker, and an earthenware crock containing salt.

In front of the table stood a chair, and above the table, behind a square of semi-opaque glass let into the wall, burned the incandescent mantle I have already spoken about. Also, in one of the window corners hung a small bracket bearing a slate, slate pencils, pencil box, and paper, while below on the floor were a dustpan, a duster, and two brushes that I never learned the proper use of. Finally, along one of the walls leant a bed and a mattress with two blankets hung over, the bed made of three pliant planks battened together, and the mattress, a typical 'donkey's breakfast,' stuffed with crackly straw.

"'Tis a far, far better thing I do now," said I, laying the plank contraption on the floor and arranging the mattress, sheets, and blankets on it, "than I have ever done", and, as I donned my voluminous nightie and turned in, "'Tis a far, far better rest I go to, than I have ever known."

Soon after I became aware of an unwinking eye regarding me through the peephole in the door, then its owner turned out the light, and I fell thankfully asleep.

The next I knew was hearing a bell ringing in the dark of the morning, the light being turned on, and voices and footsteps outside on the landing. So up I got and dressed, propped my bed along the wall,

and sat at the table reading the list of prison rules which hung above my head

Suddenly the door burst open and two warders bounced in

"Any applications?" demanded one of them, ready with pen and paper to note down my slightest wish. But as I only stared at him in wonder he said, "No applications—right!" and popped along to the next cell

"Look shippy, Twenty-nine!" ordered the other one, the warder of the landing. "Get a bucket and scrubber, and scrub out your cell. Floor, bed, wash-stand, table, chair—scrub everything! Put your books this way. Arrange your plate and spoon—so! And here's a lad'll show you how to fix your bed. Come out while he goes in."

While this lad, another prisoner, showed me how to fold and hang my sheets and blankets over the bed in the regulation manner, I stood outside looking on. That done, I shuffled along the gangway as fast as my heelless slippers would allow, collected a bucketful of hot water, soap, scrubber, swab, and a couple of things like horses' knee-pads, and shuffled back to my cell. And if you multiply my actions and occupation by 132—the number of prisoners in the whole hall—you will get a fair idea of what a busy house ours was.

As once upon a time I had worked as an assistant steward on a Western Ocean boat, the art of scrubbing was not unknown to me, so I gave my cell a lightning *French scrub*, and sat down to await breakfast. Nor had I long to wait. Soon the warder came round, door by door, accompanied by two *cleaners*, or trusted helpers, bearing the porridge, tea, and small loaf of bread which constituted the morning meal. And I, as the warder locked it in with me, laughed hard as the glad blood went and

THE seven fleeting days which I spent in Brixton are to be numbered among the happiest I have ever spent

And when in due course I came to mix with the other prisoners, and to walk and talk with them in the *Ring*, or exercise yard, I found happiness, by its presence rather than by its absence, to be most marvellously conspicuous

After all, why shouldn't it have been so? Weren't we all guests of His Majesty? Weren't we being lodged, fed, tended, and taken care of with such punctiliousness as no Duke of England could hope to command? Weren't we likewise immune, most gloriously immune, from all the ills the outer world is heir to? Weren't our lives ordered as in a monastery? Weren't thought for ourselves and personal responsibility taken out of our tired hands? A thousand times yes! And for worry or lamentation what cause had we? The bully beef, possibly, and maybe the suet pudding, but otherwise absolutely none!

Carefreedom was our crown, so our throne was happiness—for the time being. For down the vista of pleasant days and peaceful nights of the term of our remand loomed the spectre of release and all that it might signify. Meanwhile there were the amenities of prison life

The first of these was the unbroken stillness that prevailed once the cell door was shut upon a man. The second, the uninterrupted study and thought the first conduced to. And third, the literature with which we were supplied. For beside the Bible, Prayer Book, and another religious work, two library books were issued to each prisoner once a

week My two were Marion Crawford's *A Roman Singer* and *The Indiscretions of Archie* by P G Wodehouse

When tired of thinking or reading there always remained the slate to fall back upon One could write on this Indeed, when I came to examine mine I found that its former owner had written thereon to some purpose covering one side with a beautifully composed account of his life and wanderings prior to his arrest

Then, of course, we mustn't forget the mail bags The sewing of these helped to fill in any spare time one might possibly have possessed And if one worked hard enough and long enough, it was rumoured in the galleries, one could earn something like from ten to fifteen shillings a week But I'm afraid it was only a rumour Although I managed with infinite toil to complete two whole mail bags during my seven days, yet when I, hopeful Scot, came to draw my wages, I was told that the amount of work I had done hadn't even paid for the sewing materials with which the prison had supplied me !

On the other hand, it was a work calling for no great skill or manual dexterity All it required was a knack And the secret of that knack was imparted to us by the prison tailor He came round the cells, and to those of us who were willing to work he supplied a pleated hank of packthread, a ball of cobbler's wax, a pair of blunt scissors, a thimble without a top, a needle, and a large piece of canvas about five feet square Then he showed us what to do , which was this We had to fold over the square of canvas until the two edges met , then, using not less than eight stitches to the inch, and taking care not to pucker the canvas, stitch together the two edges That done, we must turn what was now a bottomless sack outside in, and sew it again down

the inside Then, taking another, and smaller, piece of canvas we had to sew it on to the foot of the sack, outside and inside, so as to produce a square bottom And that was all Still, as it took me a whole day and a half to finish one mail bag, you can understand that it wasn't so simple as it sounds

But to me, who had just come off a tramp diet 3000 miles long, the most appealing amenity of the lot was that of regular meals I was fed like a fighting cock. And not only did I fill out and put on weight, but my hair began to curl as it never curled in my life before, so that to save my face—a curly-headed man being an abomination and a contradiction in terms—I was obliged to plaster it down with soap (the hair, not the face) every time I went out to exercise For the food, though plain, was honestly cooked and plentiful And although the breakfast and supper menu never changed, yet the dinners were different every day

The first meal of the day was given us in the dim dawn, and consisted of a plate of porridge, a small loaf of grey prison bread, and a generous pint of hot tea Then at noon, or perhaps before noon, for we had no means of telling the time, dinner was brought round. And of this bread and potatoes were always the constant items, we always got them, the potatoes with their jackets on, no matter what else there was Thus, the first day's meal, including those two constant items, consisted of a pint of bean soup and a large lump of very good suet pudding On the second day bully beef was substituted Then next day bacon and beans and cabbage was the menu And the next again, suet pudding and bean soup reappeared Finally, on the last day of my imprisonment I had meat and vegetables for dinner

Then for supper, or what was really afternoon tea—for they served it at four o'clock or thereabouts—

we always had the same things a small loaf of bread, a tiny pat of butter, or margarine rather, and a brimming pint of hot cocoa And from then on until next morning was a foodless void But ever since our warder had discovered me to be an expert wielder of the scrubbing brush, and had exploited my expertness to his own advantage, he always saw to it that I was given a lot more tommy than what I was entitled to

Exercise twice a day was another diversion Every forenoon and afternoon for half an hour, or maybe more, we were made to walk briskly round and round the *Ring* or exercise yard

It all comes back to me so clearly.

Round we go, round and round and round again Some with heads up, shoulders back, and arms and legs working vigorously, extracting from the exercise the maximum of good Others—others don't seem to care a hoot how little they extract from it

Above our heads is the blue sky, beneath our feet the green grass and the circular walkway of narrow flags, all round us the dingy yellow brick-work of the prison buildings

To-day we are fifty strong, and a more motley company you never saw Yet, did you happen to meet any one of us in the street you would pass him by without a second glance or a moment's thought But that's the terror of it Our very ordinariness invests each of us, to my way of thinking, with a something terrifyingly akin to the hellish—to the diabolic It is as though each were a sinister Mr Hyde suavely and cold-bloodedly masquerading as a douce Dr Jekyll And when I catch a companion-walker's glances I see in his eyes what I know he must also see in mine a look that accuses at the same time as it interrogates



"Pretender!" it seems to say "Wolf in sheep's clothing! Hypocrite!" And I shudder at its dread significance.

The exercise yard is a large grassy square inlaid with three roughly circular and concentric walkways. On the north and south sides rise the sombre three-storeyed prison halls with their triple rows of cell windows, while on the east and west sides are the chapel and cookhouse respectively. And there we go round and round and round again.

Facing each other with the whole width of the outer walkway between them, and mounted on foot-high pedestals of stone, two warders supervise us. And when, for some reason or other, a batch of walkers are picked out and led away under the charge of another warder, one supervisor bellows to his mate "Six away, sir! Forty-four!" and the other replies in a similar bull-like roar "Six away! Forty-four, sir!" (For, curiously enough, they address each other as *sir* or *mister*.) And round and round we go again.

But, understand, we are none of us convicts—so far. For on the little printed cards stuck outside our cell doors the word *Unconvicted* is plainly discernible. No, the majority are, like me, suspects on remand awaiting enquiries, others are debtors, some are awaiting trial, while one or two, noticeable for the dago cut about their cheekbones, are awaiting deportation.

On the outer walkway the young and the fit are made to put their best foot forward. On the middle, and of course smaller, walkway, the not-so-fit along with the don't-want-to-be-fit, put their worst foot forward, and on the tiny innermost walkway one wretched cripple hurples round on his crutch. And by far the greater number wear the clothes they were arrested in, while we all have our cloth tab

buttoned, for reference, to our jacket                      Round  
and round and round again

The man in front of me, with a big hole in the heel of his sock, is an Australian from Ballarat, and has seen most of the world—Australia, America, Africa—and the Islands! He has been to the Islands! Lord love me, and he comes to foggy London to be arrested! But——

“Now, then, Twenty-nine!” bellows the warder “Not so close, brother, dear, not so blooming close!” And I fall back to hear what my rear companion has to say. For talk is not exactly prohibited. He has been *in* for seven weeks now, he tells me, and still “Judgment withheld” is the verdict in his case. He is an expert motor-thief, but looks exactly like a typical Sabbath school superintendent.

“Jock,” he says to me, “I’ve got the whole shebang guessing. I know more about the Law than the poor suffering beak himself. I’ve got them by the short hairs. They can’t convict me!”

So, round we go, each airing his own particular case to truly sympathetic ears—round and round and round again.

Suddenly it starts raining. At the warder’s word a *cleaner* falls out, disappears for a moment, then returns laden with a huge consignment of blue cloth capes. Good heavens—more coddling! And each of us, as he passes the flung-down pile of capes, picks up one, dons it, and continues his way rejoicing, through a small fine rain that wouldn’t damp blotting paper.

Then, just when the monotony of the exercise is beginning to manifest itself, one warder bellows to the other, “All right, mister!” and back we troop to our hall, climb up to our landing, and, replacing our heavy shoes with our carpet slippers, thankfully

enter our homely little cell, and bang shut the door on all the world

Another amenity was worship. Three times a week we attended church. And it really was a church—a proper full-sized church, having the same architectural features outside and inside as churches in the outer world. Nay, it even boasted a steeple, or rather, what had all the outward appearance of a steeple, although actually it was the cook-house chimney camouflaged as one.

The pews were ordinary pews, and the prisoners sat in them, not too closely, though, just as in an ordinary church. Only, at intervals all down the aisles, and attached to the pew-ends, were high one-man seats facing inwards, where the warders sat and supervised us throughout the service.

This latter, of course, was that of the English Church, and it was a curious experience to listen to the hearty voices of what the world would call sinners chanting their adoration in all sincerity. And although sometimes the preacher sailed rather closer to the wind than was absolutely necessary, still, on the whole, his sermons were always admirable models of tact. For, if you consider what his congregation was, you must admit that the situation did call for tact—tact and restraint—a whole lot of restraint.

Well, day followed day with almost breathless rapidity, and not for one single second was I ever bored. I hadn't time for boredom. What with eating meals, anticipating meals, and digesting meals, what with reading, writing and thinking, what with walking in the *Ring*, scrubbing out cells, sewing mail bags, going to church, tripping over my heelless slippers, and soaping down my would-be curly hair, every minute of my time was fully occupied.

Singularly enough, I found more of interest in the prison and its routine than in the prisoners themselves. For these latter, of whom not a few belonged to the professional criminal class, were the most ordinary lot of men I have ever met or mixed with. They would have made Lombroso weep. For of the hundred and thirty-two prisoners who occupied the same hall as I only one solitary individual could be said to belong to the avowed criminal type of man. Faithful he among the faithless, only he Criminality screamed and shrieked from every jut and hollow of his repellent physiognomy. There you beheld the receding forehead, the enormous jaws, the large projecting ears, the wrinkles, the hairless cheeks, and the ferocious feline eyes of Lombroso's *delinquent man*. And when you looked at him you felt that the doctrine of freewill hadn't a leg to stand on. You pitied him. He was the victim of heredity. You thought that it wasn't a prison he should be in, but an asylum—or a lethal chamber.

As my holiday neared its end the grim spectre of release took on gargantuan proportions, and my last night's sleep behind prison walls was not so sound as my first had been. I was wondering all the time what the morrow might hold. What had the splits been up to during these seven days? Had their enquiries been to any purpose? Had they found me out? Had they run to earth the records of my former arrests? If so, would I be released to-morrow, or sentenced to further imprisonment?

Thus I wondered. And, although a certain amount of fear and dread lurked at the back of all my wondering, yet, further back still, beyond and above that fear and dread, was the wish and the hope that I might not win out to freedom just yet.

ON the last morning of the period of my remand I was up betimes, and it was with rather mixed feelings that I set about gathering together my cell kit and stuffing it into my pillow-case

To be honest, I felt more sorry than glad to be leaving behind me, maybe forever, such a haven of peace and quietness as my little cell had been. It was like bidding a tried and found-true companion a last farewell. And if I didn't literally drop a tear or two during the melancholy business of tidying up, I'm sure I sobbed bitterly enough in a figurative sort of way.

No sooner had I finished packing than the thrilling cry of "All discharges down below!" rang round the galleries, and my door flew open. So, slinging the bulging pillow-case over a shoulder and bundling my little library under an arm, I took a last look round the cell.

It would know me no more. Although many another B3/29 would lodge therein in the years to follow, never again would its little mirror on the wall mirror back the same B3/29 as it mirrored now. It would know me no more, but neither could it forget. For on the lintel of the door there was carved my monica *Tramp-Royal, 1928*. That, forever, would keep green the memory.

Bidding good-bye, I hurried along the landing past the shut doors of the other cells and rattled down the staircase into the dim well of the great hall. Nor was I unaccompanied. Other discharges, numbering about a score, were also racing downstairs, pillow-cases on back and books under arm, all eager for release.

After handing over our cell kit, books, and number-

tab to the warder on hall duty we were herded along an echoing corridor to the dressing cubicles, where we changed into our own clothes. And there was much wailing and gnashing of teeth as we looked down at ourselves and saw how vilely our clothes were wrinkled. And although mine were bad, yet those of my next-door neighbour were wrinkled even as tripe, whereat he waxed exceeding mad.

"Here!" he called to the warder, "look at them wrinkles! Take a dekk at them blinking wrinkles! What you gonna do about it, hey?"

"Sorry, brother," came the reply, "I can't do anything."

"Oh, you can't, can't you!" exploded the wrinkled one, forgetting in his wrath that it was a prison he was in. "Then if that's how you're gonna treat our clothes, by heaven," he cried, "*I'll never come back here again!*"

Just at this our breakfast of porridge, bread, and tea came along, and we stopped laughing to dispose of it. Then a midday meal of bully beef and two slices of bread was next given us, and this we stuffed into our pockets, marvelling greatly. Then while the rest were carefully shepherded into a couple of waiting Black Marias and driven off, my erstwhile friend, the egotistical Aussie, and I were shown into a waiting-room with a big roaring fire in it, and told that our taxi wouldn't be long. So there we sat comparing prison experiences, and when the taxi-cab ultimately arrived, two young cops assisted us inside and got in themselves, and away we drove through one of the most gloriously sunny mornings I have ever been abroad in.

We motored only halfway, though. For when a certain suburban railway station was reached the taxi drew up, and the four of us went inside to

await the train which was to carry us over the rest of our journey

As we sat on the platform smoking the cigarettes which one of the bobbies had handed round, we were an object of intense interest to the business men and women who thronged the station. And the Aussie, seeing this, and also that nearly everybody was either reading a paper or carrying a paper or book to read, leant across to me and said, pointing to the crowd

"Scotty, do you see that? Although they are despising us two as Law-breakers, yet they can't take their eyes off us. And why? Because they know—those well-fed, respectable, cushy-jobbed people know—that, while they themselves can only read about life, you and I, by thunder, are living it!"

After a short journey in the train we alighted at another station and walked the rest of the way to the police court. Here, while a man in blue appropriated my friend the Aussie and took him out of my life for ever, I was met on the steps by the two linguistic splits who had arrested me, and we went into court and sat down to await the magistrate.

Needless to say, the detectives wanted to know how I had endured my week in durance vile, and seemed very much taken aback on learning that I hadn't endured it at all, but, on the contrary, had enjoyed every minute of its seven happy days. Nay, it offended them so much that until the appearance of the magistrate they both remained deeply in the huff with me.

"John Thingmy!" announced the beak, and while I took up a dumb and humble stance behind the bar, one of the two splits entered the witness-box and took the oath—or didn't, for I'm hazy on this point.

He proceeded to give the gist of what I had related on the evening following my arrest, and which covered quite a lot of otherwise immaculate foolscap pages. He outlined what I had led him to believe was my career. He conducted the interested court on the wild goose chase of what I had led him to believe were my travels, and finally he confessed that, although he and his mate had pursued diligent enquiry at what I had led him to believe was my address, nothing of an incriminating nature was to be found there against any person bearing what I had led him to believe was my name. Then after this exhibition of police incompetence he stood down.

"You see, Thingmy," said the magistrate, leaning across his desk and eyeing me benevolently over his specs, "it was your own fault. And if you continue to wander about the country at a loose end, as you 'ave been in the 'abit of doing in the past, then you must accept the consequences. The policemen only did their duty in taking you into custody. And all I can say is this: that when you leave the court I 'ope you will find some employment more respectable, and at the same time more profitable, than this aimless tramping about the roads. As nothing whatever 'as been found against you, you are discharged with the caution not to be found again in this neighbourhood. But before you go I advise you to see the probation officer. 'E might be able to 'elp you."

The magistrate was right. The probation officer was indeed able to help me. Better still, he did help me. He took me into his particular den, and, while I allowed him to flatter himself that he was dragging my true life-story out of me by sheer skill in questioning, he opened the doors of a clothes cupboard and asked what I lacked in the way of dress.

Now, as I lacked nearly everything in the way of



dress, from the shoes up, you can imagine that the fitting-out that followed must have been a lengthy one. It was! And then, after I was all dressed up, the probation officer asked me if I had nowhere to go. And I said yes, but that I lacked the 'bus fare. Whereupon Big Heart not only slipped me a tanner on his own account, but also a couple of tommy-tickets on somebody else's account—one to the tune of a bob, and the other to the melody of two-and-a-bender. And I thanked him with the required fervour and took myself off.

As it was nearly midday by this time, I went into a nearby sausage restaurant and exchanged one of the tickets for a dinner, then with the other one I procured a huge armful of provisions which I didn't know what to do with. However, seeing a large common close at hand, I was making my embarrassed way towards it, intending to reduce the bulk of the stuff by eating what I could, when I barged into no less a person than the split who had arrested me.

"Hello!" he said, patronisingly, and looking round to make sure no one saw him talking to a tramp. "Hello! And where are you off to now?"

"I'm off on my own business," I retorted. "Good-bye to you!"

And later, as I sat gorging sardines and tongue and ham and tomatoes and cheese and pork pies and biscuits in a deserted part of the common, I laughed merrily to myself at the thought of what a pitifully easy mark that brilliant, linguistic, so-cock-sure-of-himself, sleuthy bloodhound of the Law had been. Ha! ha! ha!

If only he had known how shamelessly he had been tricked and diddled and toyed with by the same simple-seeming tramp to whom he was ashamed to be seen talking!

My slight brush with the Law, and my brief taste of life behind prison bars, taught me many things. It taught me that policemen, detectives, and magistrates are not the faultless machines they are thought to be, but that instead they are as woefully fallible even as you and I. It taught me what a monstrous horror circumstantial evidence can be. It taught me—which was best of all—that there is no gloom so dark, no despair so deep, and no dawn so hopeless that cannot be lightened and made endurable by a saving sense of humour. But mostly it taught me—which was worst of all—that familiarity with the Law must, in any right-thinking, logical minded man, breed nothing but contempt for the Law.

## THE DIRGE OF THE DOLE

(SIGNING-ON SONG OF THE  
UNEMPLOYABLES)

We are the also-ranners,  
Us workless blokes on the Dole ,  
And for fifteen bob's worth o' tanners  
We've sold our immortal soul  
To this damned Buroo we've sold it,  
Entire, with a scrape o' the pen ,  
Did ever you see such ones as we—  
Mugs who might have been men !

But nobody never told us,  
'Twas all so fruity at first ,  
And money-for-dirt consoled us  
When we joined this queue accursed  
The gaffer he'd spoke to the foreman,  
The foreman he'd gave us the sack,  
And this God-damned Dole gobbled us whole,  
And we found its innards were black !

Black as the Pit, and blacker,  
But they gave us the fifteen bob ,  
So slacker we grew, and slacker,  
Till we trembled in fear of a job  
And we changed our digs for the dosshouse,  
We cut expenses by half ,  
And, instead of on corn, we lived forlorn  
On the very cheapest of chaff !

## THE DIRGE OF THE DOLE

But happened a thing thereafter,  
Something we didn't expect  
The Dole pinched all of our laughter,  
And robbed us of self-respect !  
It made us feel we were worthless,  
It made us brood till we *knew* ,  
Oh, we wish we was dead ! A curse on the head  
Of the man who began the Buroo !

So here in the queue of a morn,  
With broken boots to our feet,  
We stand, fair game for the scorn  
Of the work-proud man-in-the-street ,  
Hopeless, prideless, and purseless—  
Only ' the blokes on the Dole ' ?  
By God, you're wrong ! (What a theme for a song !)  
We're the blokes who've been robbed of our soul !



# IN GALLOWAY

## LAP THE FIRST

### NORTHWARD TO CARSPHAIRN

Galloway—Scotland's Shame—A libel in stone—Baptising a drum—A Young Mortality—A diverting pair—Maxwelton Braes—Learning stonebreaking—A grand morning—A fair exchange—The Glenkens—Dalry—Moorburning—Tinker's Loup—Cats and dogs

THIS is me again, years after

I am just back from another tramp—in Galloway this time—and if you will listen and not interrupt I'll tell you nearly everything

Galloway, as you maybe know, lies in the very south-west of Scotland, and is made up of the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright and the shire of Wigtown, or, as people are supposed to call them for short, The Stewartry and The Shire, and it stretches, as the saying goes, " frae the Brigg-en' o' Dumfries to the Braes o' Glenapp "

As usual, antiquaries and etymologists and other blokes who ought to be learned in such matters, don't know for sure where Galloway got its name. While some assume that it was called after the Gallgaels (whoever they were), others surmise that it was King Galdus (whoever he was) who bequeathed to it its monica

Be that as it may, it was from the Brigg-en' o' Dumfries that I started out on my Gallovidian gallivanting. Accompanied by hail and sleet—but first let me run down Dumfries to you, let me belittle

it in a big way and dwell long on its shortcomings, floodlighting its imperfections so that I shall be recompensed in some sort for the—but we won't go into that yet awhile, that's all to follow

First, then, comes the Auld Brigg, Devorgilla's Brigg This is an eye-sore It is quite as disfiguring to the Nith as the new concrete atrocity at Kirkcudbright is to the Dee For it is old, and decayed, and mossy, and useless, and ugly, and one wonders where the eyes of the old-time Levellers were that they overlooked it, else "Ower wi' it, lads!" would surely have been the word

Second comes Scotland's Shame I mean the hovel that Dumfries allowed Burns to die in poverty in

"Whaur's Burns's Hoose, boy?" I asked of a wee fellow in Whitesands.

"Burns's Hoose?" says he, and he told me how to get to it I went astray, though, and had to bother a policeman

"Burns's House?" repeats the policeman "Why, yonder's Burns's House," and he pointed out a little house standing in a back street up a brae looking on to a sort of brickyard

But it wasn't Burns's House It was Burns' House! It said so above the door, just like that "Burns' House" Possibly Burns's House is elsewhere

As by this time hail and sleet were falling, I abandoned the search for Burns's House and sped along to St Michael's Church, where in the graveyard stands the Mausoleum And did I find this? Sure I did, hidden away at the back where you would expect to find a rubbish dump and not a national monument to a world-renowned poet of humanity Nor could I get near it A locked gate barred the way, and the key, a notice said, was kept, for some unaccountable reason, in the house

called Burns' And the Mausoleum itself was locked, bolted, and barred Yes, between iron bars I had to look, as one looks into a cage in a zoo or through a Judas-hole into a prison cell, to catch a glimpse of the libel in stone within an insufferably effeminate figure dolled up like a fop, posturing behind a plough from which the horses (in disgust I guess) have long since fled

That, Land o' Cakes and brither Scots, is a sculptor's conception of the virile Burns

Consigning Dumfries to Chaos and Old Night, I strode along Whitesands past the Weir and crossed the bridge into Brigg-en', or Maxwelltown And as I struck northwards on the road to Moniaive I little thought that when next I should cross that bridge it would be under police escort on my way to court to enact a martyr rôle in what yet might go down in Scottish legal annals as The Great Tramp-Royal Firelighting To-do

In an on-ding of sleet and hail I pushes on through the uninteresting countryside until woodsmoke rising from a wayside planting causes me to halt and pass the time of day with the tramp who is enjoying a drum-up there

"Chum," says I, unslinging and opening my peter, "I hae a new drum here that badly needs baptising How aboot lending me your fire?"

"Sure," he begins, "you——" But just at that I flashes out my new drum, and he blushes into the whites of his eyes as he sees how virginal it is so bright and shining that a bloke could see to curtail his whiskers in it

"For ony sake," he says, modestly lowering his gaze, "hurry it on afore onybody else sees it Siccan cleanliness aboot a drum is—is doonricht ungodliness"

So I hurries on the drum, after filling it, and soon



it's coated over with a thin layer of soot. So I flings in a fistful of tea and sugar, and stews it, and hands it to his nibs

"Weel," says he, taking it and raising it to his mouth, "here's tae ye, mate May your peter be aye fu', your pan never toom, and your pooches neither the ane nor the ither—

Ower the lips,  
Ower the gums,  
Look oot, stomach,  
Here she comes ! "

Thereafter, the sun having appeared, I continued along the road that now began to ascend through green fields and ploughed land towards a low range of snow-sprinkled hills To *Irongray*,  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles, said a notice at a crossroads hereabouts, whereupon I ditched the main drag and went along and forded Cluden Water, and let myself in through a wicket to the graveyard attached to Irongray Church For here I knew that Scott had erected a table monument over the grave of Helen Walker, that stou't tramper, who was the original of Jeanie Deans in his *Heart of Midlothian*

I couldn't discover it, though Maybe I wasn't too much interested But as I retraced my steps to the main drag and headed for the pass in the low range of snow-sprinkled hills, I thought funereally of graves and corpses I thought of Billy Marshall, the Caird of Barullion and king of the tinker-gypsies of Galloway, whose remains are interred in Kirkcudbright, and also of another of Scott's characters, Old Mortality, whose bones lie a-mouldering in the graveyard at Caerlaverock, south of Dumfries

Thinking of this last corpse reminded me of the time in one of the Ridings of Yorkshire when I

myself was what you might call a sort of Young Mortality

In those days I was a plumber's mate, and my boss and I were working on the new wing of a convent. If I had time I could tell you astonishing things about the sharpness of nuns' tongues and tempers. And there was a joiner there, whom, because his surname was Mundy and his first name Easter, we used to call Pancake Tuesday. And while in his off-time this bloke preached in a Methodist chapel, his working-time he mostly spent making a wooden cross for his old mother's grave out of wood belonging to the contractor. And it was said that he could move a congregation to tears. Anyway, when the cross is finished this Pancake fella hears about me being a bit of a signwriter, so he gives me the job of doing the epitaph. And he paid me for it. And after we'd set it up on his old mother's grave and were leaving the graveyard, Pancake sort of trips over another cross that needed renovating. So we gets the order for that, too, me using my boss's paint, and Pancake renovating out of the contractor's wood during the contractor's time, and moving congregations to tears during his own. And curiously enough, when we'd set up this second cross and were again leaving the graveyard, Pancake again sort of trips over a cross that was on its last legs! And we gets the order for that too, and for all the other dilapidated crosses that we used often to sort of trip over—even on bright moonlight nights. And we were well on the way to making a mint of money out of the thing when Pancake suddenly disappeared.

Aye, and I remember the day of his disappearance well, too. It was the day that the old village pig-killer's young wife and the Methodist chapel's Memorial Fund disappeared.

So low was yon range of snow-sprinkled hills that it was only when I happened to look behind, some time later, that I realised I had passed over and beyond them without noticing. In the interval, however, I had fallen in with a tramping knives-to-grind and his wife. Maybe that explained it. For they were as diverting a pair as ever I have taken stock of on the Toby.

When I came up with them the woman was trudging ahead wheeling the grinder, the man following at a distance. And as I opens my mouth to pass him a word of greeting she turns like a flash and tells me off.

"Leave Sanny alane!" she cries. "He's wearit I'm wearit. We're baith wearit. Grinding rotten knives has wearit him, and trying to find rotten knives to grind has wearit me. Don't talk to us. He's feeling rotten, I'm feeling rotten. Tak' your rotten sel' aff or I'll stop hurling this rotten thing and gie ye a bit o' my rotten tongue!"

"Aye," cannily advised Sanny then, with ominous quiet, "ye'd better tak' yoursel' aff, mate, afore Murrn starts, or she'll no' feenish atween here and Minnihive."

That did it.

"Oh, she'll no' feenish, wull she no'!" roars Murrn, galvanically coupling the rotten grinder into the ditch and whirling on us both. "She'll no' feenish atween here and Minnihive—wull she no'!"

"Aye, atween here and Minnihive, Murrn," repeats Sanny, rubbing it in like, "Ye'll no' feenish atween here and Minnihive!"

But I didn't wait for more. When a bloke pitches a hissing toich into a powder magazine in that reckless way, it's—"Lower the boats! Men and children first!"

Onward and northward, alongside Cairn Water, I

followed the road through sunshine and shower into Moniaive, the bordering countryside getting on my nerves. For it is just countryside and nothing more tame and domestic and useful, the kind that puts whiskers on a tramp.

Passing where Maxwellton Braes are alleged to lie (though I saw nothing that could be truthfully termed braes), I caught sight of the white mansion above the road where Bonnie Annie—but you surely don't want the usual travel-book stuff, do you? Yes? Well I'm not giving you any.

Outside Moniaive (or Minnihive, for this is another of those Cholmondelay-Marjoribanks sillinesses) I stopped and talked with a stonebreaker for a spell, marvelling at the strength he put behind each blow, and being tickled by the strenuous "outcha!" with which he accompanied himself.

"Seven years it—outcha!—taen me to learn the trade," he said. "For it is a trade. Outcha! outcha! And as ye can see I use the full arm stroke. Like that. Outcha! outcha! (Blast ye, break! This weather—outcha!—toughens them.) Which is what no' mony stanebreakers use the full arm stroke. Outcha! Seven years it taen me to learn it. Seven—outcha!—years."

Seven years—I thought, walking on towards Moniaive. Seven years—and I learned it in about seven minutes once upon a time in a spike, Cannock spike, down in the Midlands. For, says the tramp-major, locking me in a cell along with a shovel, two hammers, a pair of goggles, and a couple of hundred-weight of big flinty cobbles, "You wain't be letten out till you've putten them there stones out through them there holes. And as them there stones bain't little enough for to be putten out through them there holes, you'm got to break 'em till they be."

Now 'them there' holes were the small circular

openings in an iron gille or sieve which leant outward at an angle into the workhouse yard and served at the same time to admit light and air. And the tramp-major was a man of his word. He didn't release me until I had broken up that two hundredweight of big flinty cobbles into pieces small enough to be shovelled out through those same circular openings. And, as I say, in about seven minutes I learned the trade, or knack, of stone-breaking, which is this—find the line of cleavage, and the hammer will do the rest—always supposing that the hammerer has the patience of a Job and the muscular development of a Samson!

Moniaive is a village, "quhilk to consider," as the old makar would have said, "is ane pane." It is little and clean and tidy, too clean and tidy to be interesting. And it was dead as death. The single street composing it was quite deserted, so that I strode along it hurling derogatory remarks to right and left.

At the end of the village I ramstammed into darkening night, whereupon, after proceeding a little way, I huddled down in my blanket behind a dyke and remained there until morning broke over the tops of those almost imperceptible undulations that the guide-book has the nerve to call hills.

The morning was grand, though. From low down in the unclouded sky the gorgeous sun poured forth its tide of light, flooding the land with bright gold, moist airs hung about the pristine day as though the longer to preserve its first freshness, within slingshot of me stalked a lapwing, a pearl of dew pendent from its crest's tip. In buoyant spirits I took the road.

South-westward this now led, paralleling Castlefern Water, into a wide waste of moorland pastures. Up and up it climbed, winding in places, until all around

## A GRAND MORNING

and about as far as sight could see lay a bushless, treeless world of low grassy hills, where wandering flocks sent up an endless mournful crying, and curlews called, so that as I fared onward through the now windy April weather I could not help repeating over and over again

“Blows the wind to-day, and the sun and the rain are flying,  
Blows the wind on the moors to-day and now,  
Where about the graves of the martyrs the whaups are crying,  
My heart remembers how !”

“Grey recumbent tombs of the——” Oh, all right, then, you needn't get shirty about it ! I thought you cared for that sort of thing, that's all I'll know again

These moors, however, although vacant, were not wine-red. Being covered with coarse grass instead of heather, their colour was a nondescript yallery-greenery that early gave me the pip. Hence I was relieved when, after traversing this tame wilderness for long enough, the dark tops of pines unexpectedly hove up round a bend in the road.

In no time I had lighted a fire, and I am sitting enjoying a drum-up sheltered from the wind by the earthy base of an uprooted pine, when a tramp comes prowling through the planting.

“Hae ye a cigarette, chum ?” he asks, approaching and warming his hands at the blaze.

“Haven't you any yourself ?” I reply.

“I've got some hard-up and fag papers, but I thought that if you had a real cigarette——”

“Sure,” says I, “but if I give you a real cigarette you'll have to give me some of your hard-up and a fag paper. Is it a go ?”

It is In exchange for a real cigarette the tramp hands me some hard-up and a paper to roll it in And while I roll mine he lights his, inhaling the smoke like a starving man wolfing tommy

"Oh, man," says he, "it's great to smoke a real cigarette again!"

"You're right," says I, lighting up and doing likewise "It's great to smoke a real cigarette again!"

For it was there, the old half-forgotten, dreamed-of fragrance, if not so strong, not so soothing, not so satisfying as of yore But that was because of the money lining my pouches Money takes the flavour out of most things

Ah, those B D V's, those Bend Down Virginias, those rollings of hard-up stooped for shamelessly in gutters, fought for like gold in spikes, yearned for like drugs in prison cells, no brand, be it blended so cunningly, compounded so rarely, can come anywhere near them those rubbishy fags, those mouth-blistering, lung-roasting, pestiferous gaspers of adversity!

Quitting the planting, I climbed with the road on to an airy upland region, where I was rewarded with an extensive, almost bird's-eye, view of what is known as the Glenkens

This Glenkens is that district, comprising the parishes of Carsphairn, Dalry, Balmaclellan, and Kells, which occupies the long, low, wooded valley of Ken Water And on the far side of this, running north-and-south, a rugged rampart of snow-covered hills which I knew to be Kells Range gloomed across at me from under wicked-looking banks of thunder-cloud.

Leaving the barren uplands I descended with the

road into the verdant valley, and shortly came into Dalry

Dalry I found to be just a long street on a brae with houses on both sides. Nevertheless, before ever entering it I knew it for a go-ahead community abreast of the times, alive to the benefits deriving from tourist traffic, and acutely conscious of, no less than assiduous in catering for, the stranger's needs, wants, and requirements. How did I know this? Because where the road enters Dalry I came upon a wayside seat! Yes, and I've since learned that not only is there another wayside seat where the road leaves Dalry, but that in Dalry itself there are two, actually two, automatic cigarette machines. And one of them works!

As a consequence of this bewildering plethora of amenities—which, to my mind, robbed the place of its old-world, almost prehistoric-world, charm—I threw just one glance down the length of the village to where a policeman at the bottom stood in the usual trance, then I hit the road to Carsphairn.

In the evening calm, with the sun blazing golden in the west and the green woods of Ken thrilling with warblings far below in the blue dusk of the valley, I toiled up the lonely ever-ascending hill-track looking for a place. Mile by mile along the barren braesides I climbed higher and higher into the north, revelling in the Highland aspect things had assumed. For here, from the few farms and roadside cottages, there wafted the fragrance of peat-reek, and here heather grew, and here great pungent clouds from moorburn drifted across the hill. I was in my element.

"Yon's Cairnsmore, I suppose?" says I to a sadly singed moorburner, pointing northward to a mass of mountain stuff filling the sky.



“ Aye, yon’s Cairnsmore. Cairnsmore o’ Carsphairn  
For, as ye ken,

There’s Cairnsmore o’ Fleet,  
And there’s Cairnsmore o’ Dee,  
But Cairnsmore o’ Carsphairn’s  
The highest o’ the three ! ”

But, says you, interrupting the even flow of narrative what about this moorburning, Tramp-Royal? What’s it for? Well, says I, it’s sort of shrouded in mystery the why and wherefore of it, I mean. Some say that it’s to get rid of the old heather, and others say that it’s so that sheep will benefit by the new green shoots. And grouse are mixed up in it, too, if I mind right. But between you and me, I think the folk who set fire to the heather just do it for devilment. Yes. They’re human beings, that’s why. And what human being doesn’t love to kindle a blaze and watch it hiss and crackle and devour and lay waste, eh? No, moorburning, if you ask me, is simply another name for an orgy of pagan fire-worship on the q t

Upward, ever upward, I went, straight, as it seemed, for Cairnsmore, and the sun set, and still I hadn’t found a place.

The road crossed the Ken at last, though, on the High Brigg o’ Ken in the shadow of Cairnsmore, and, bending at right angles, ran neck and neck with the Water of Deugh for Carsphairn, five miles distant.

Here, a bit past the bend, near Tinker’s Loup, a pinewood slopes to the riverside. Down through this in the gloaming I therefore picked my way, and on a level stretch of turf by the water’s edge, under a pine, I unslung my pack, lighted a fire of deadwood, and encamped for the night.

This Tinker's Loup, you should know, is a place where the rapid river rushes through a deep and narrow rocky cleft, and like all such Loups, or Leaps, it has its legend

It seems that a tinker, Tam Marshall by name, and a horner and sornier like the majority of the Marshall tribe, once happened to be in the kitchen of a nearby farmhouse where a big pan o' puddens was sizzling on the fire. And he must have been pretty desperately hungry at the time, for before anybody could stop him this Tam fella ups with the pan o' puddens, outs the house with them, and with a mob of hungry ploughmen howling and yelly-hooing after him, legs it for safety.

He hasn't legged it far, though, when he finds himself heading straight for this deep cleft where the river rushes through. But it's puddens, or bust. So in one tremendous spring the bold Tam leaps the cleft, and, coolly sitting down on the far side with his legs dangling over the edge, he chests in at those puddens under the outraged eyes and noses of the baulked ploughmen.

And some say that after he had eaten all, and licked out the big pan, Tam threw it back over the cleft with a sly "There's your wee dish, men!"

While I'm lying half-asleep blinking at the fire I gradually become conscious of a four-footed something prowling about among the dark pines and occasionally stopping to take a long look at me. And it reminds me of yon sheepdog which, you'll maybe remember, once annoyed me in a firwood near Linn of Dee. But this time, I soon see, it isn't a dog. It's a cat. And it, in turn, reminds me of a night long ago in a cave on Loch-nan-Uamh, when a great shaggy Persian, with broken twigs and burrs clinging to its torn and blood-stained coat, and wearing round

its neck a silver collar, walked in from the beach and snuggled down beside me.

Well, this cat among the pines, after more prowling and stopping and looking, at length deigned to come forward into the firelight. It ignored me absolutely, however. And after sniffing everything sniffable it cast a last disdainful look around and haughtily marched off.

I was hurt by this. For I like and greatly admire cats, far more so than dogs. Dogs arouse my contempt. When you whip a dog it sneaks off whining, with its tail between its legs, or else crawls on its belly to lick your hand. Yet lots of people see lots of nobility in lots of dogs. Not I. I see only the cowed spirit of a white-livered cur and craven (the same spirit, by the by, which moves certain income-taxpayers to queue up to pay income-tax long before it's time to pay income-tax). And this is something I don't like to see. What I like to see is the noble and astounding valour of the cat that makes it turn even upon a man, and, spitting hate and contumely, fight him!

## LAP THE SECOND

### THROUGH THE WILDS OF CARSPHAIRN

Lighting a fire—An unco sight—The last straw—An upland wilderness—Billy and the bonnet—Gateway into Carrick—So-long—Building a hut—Loch Doon—Vandalism—A conundrum—Swithering—On Kells Range—Descent into Carsphairn—“*Meeri deary Douvel!*”

NEXT morning I woke to the disheartening sound of rain pattering on the raincoat covering me. So I lay on for more than a couple of hours thereafter, when, the rain easing off a little, I got up and set about the task of lighting a fire with wood dripping wet.

This proved not so difficult. The dead bracken which I had spread under me beneath the ground-sheet was bone dry, and there was a lot of it, so, gathering two or three armfuls of twigs and branches, I built a pile consisting of alternate layers of wet wood and dry bracken, which on being set alight didn't take long in becoming a proper blazing fire whereon even the most sodden logs would burn.

Breakfast over, I climbed back up through the pines to the road and made my way in a smirr of rain alongside the Water of Deugh towards Carsphairn.

On my right, shrouded in dirty-looking mist, the moorish bulk of Cairnsmore reared itself aloft above a wild desert region. On my left the river in spate hurtled between its partly wooded banks in retreat from the fastnesses of Kells Range, whose heaven-

supporting peaks, Little Millyea, Meikle Millyea, Millfire, Corscrine, and Carlin's Cairn, loomed dimly ahead through the curtain of the rain. And down from these a swift wind whistled, razor-keen and edged with ice. And ever and again from some unknown art the sound of blasting boomed dully through the sunlessness.

Onward I journeyed beside the banks of Deugh for nigh on a league until, outside of Carspharn, I emerged on the main Carrick road.

Here I saw an unco sight. It was a little dwarfed effigy of a man with a big head and a coarse weazened face, jogging along, the wee bandy legs of it wearing riding breeches and the body sporting a natty coat of Newmarket cut, and between the bottom of the breeches and the tops of the boots that shod the hentoed feet the shank of either leg had no other covering save a deposit of mud plastering the calf.

"What happened to your wee leggings, chum?" I asks, falling into stride.

"Wot's that to you?" snaps the man, squinting distrustfully at me from eyes set deep and close together in the weazened face—a typical jockey face.

"I bet you anything you like," I went on, ignoring both question and snappiness, "that they were box-cloth leggings."

His distrust instantly vanished.

"Done!" he cries. "I bet you anything *you* like that they wasn't box-cloth leggings!"

"Done!" I cry in turn.

"The loser stands dinner for two at the fust inn wot we calls at. Is it a bet?"

"It is. But how can you prove they weren't box-cloth leggings?"

"By putting of 'em on!" And, bold as brass, he pulls out from inside his coat a pair of polished

leather leggings and triumphantly fits them over his bare wee muddied legs

"You see," he explained, as we entered Carsphairn, "I took 'em off so's to save 'em. They'd a' got mucked up if I hadn't of. Us tipsters wot has got a following has got to keep groomed. We always got to look toney. The toneyer we looks the more people buys our tips. There's an inn!"

It was a hotel, the Salutation Hotel, so having lost the bet I took him inside and put him outside a dinner, after which we resumed the Carrick road. For my toney pal was bound for Ayr races.

Immediately we were quit of Carsphairn, which is a bare, wind-swept, one-street hamlet, the tipster undid his leggings and put them back inside his coat. As he did so a single straw fell to the ground, and, on my calling attention to this, he made haste to stow it carefully away, saying

"It's a good thing you seen that. It's my last straw."

"Your last straw?"

"Yes. I always carries a straw or two to stick into the top of me boot."

"What for?"

"To make punters think I'm straight from a racing stable, and that the information wot I'm a-tipping 'em must 'a' been got out of the hoss's nose-bag!"

"Oh, so you're a psychologist as well as a mythologist?"

"Mythologist? Wot's mythologist?"

"You're one. It's another way of saying racing tipster. Use it the next time you sell tips. Your following will appreciate it."

"I must remember."

We were now ascending a road that steadily climbed in a miles-long rise through an upland

## TRAMP-ROYAL ON THE TOBY

wilderness of illimitable grassy braes Of shelter, either of bush or tree, there was absolutely none. It was a land from which all life, it seemed, had fled, or through which the army of the Dread Horsemen had passed, destroying all, razing all, plundering all, and leaving in its wake a forlorn vastitude of desert heath and a wind howling along an empty sky.

Far to the left of this no-man's land the tail-end of Kells Range petered out, drowning itself in Loch Doon, and far to the right Cairnsmore gazed down through its veils, and wept. And the heavens for company wept, too And they wept until their weeping was a deluge And my toney pal and I, we were walking under that deluge And to keep his mind off his wee leggings, which were in danger of becoming wet inside his wee coat, I told him this true tale

Now it happens that in court, taking note of all this, is Billy Marshall, the real robber. And he must have been having a right good laugh to himself. However, seeing the way things are going for the farmer he makes up his mind to get him out of the jam. So, all of a sudden seizing on exhibit A, the bonnet, that is, and clapping it on his own head, he boldly looks the laird in the face, and he says, says he, so that everybody can hear "Look at me, you, and tell us by the oath you've just ta'en—amn't *I* the bloke who robbed you on the road between Carsphairn and Dalmellington?"

"By heaven!" cries the laird, "you are that very man!"

"Yes, my lord," replies the wily Billy, turning to the judge, "and if you yoursel' will put on the bonnet, this laird'll declare it was your lordship who robbed him. He swears to the bonnet no matter what face is under it!"

"And so," I concluded, "Billy Marshall not only saved his own bacon, but saved that of the farmer as well. For he was immediately acquitted."

"But wasn't that wot's called contempt of court?" objected my toney pal.

"Sure it was," said I. "But the Marshalls have always been famous for their contempt of court. It runs in the blood. Oh, and yes, I forgot to tell you that while Billy Marshall was distracting everybody's attention with the bonnet caper, Flora Marshall, his wife, or rather his wife of the moment, for it's said he was legally married seventeen times, she creeps up behind the judge and pinches the very hood off his cloak!"

"No!" says the tipster.

"Yes!" says I. "What a wife for a man!"

Onward and upward over the wasteland we



trudged in the deluging rain, mile after mile Far down on our left the wind-vexed waters of Loch Doon dashed high, combing and curling like ocean breakers Then beyond little Loch Muck the road dipped and led us into an unsuspected pass sunk between high rocky walls—Glen Muck, I think it is called—which is the gateway into Carrick

This traverse was the wettest I have ever made Honestly, in all my travels I have never experienced such torrential rain as we ran the gauntlet of in that narrow way It must have been a cloud-burst. Along one side the Muck Water sped in spate, stained bright red with churned-up sediment, and rising rapidly and visibly And paralleling it like a second stream the flooded road ran—literally ran—ahead of us And speaking for myself, for the tipster, as I could plainly hear, was quite capable of speaking for himself, I was wet to the skin

Nor do I mean that figuratively What I mean is that my waterproof raincoat was soaking wet, that the thick tweed jacket under my waterproof raincoat was soaking wet, that the not-so-thin waistcoat under the thick tweed jacket was soaking wet, that the heavy shirt under the not-so-thin waistcoat was soaking wet, that the woollen singlet under the heavy shirt was soaking wet, that the skin under the woollen singlet was soaking wet, and that the very marrow of the bones under the skin actually felt as though it were soaking wet, too!

Fortunately the traverse was a short one, Glen Muck being of no great length, and our successful passage was rewarded by a slackening off on the rain's part and a reduced velocity on the wind's

Hardly have we issued from the narrow way, though, when my toney pal and I come to where a branch road on the left strikes back overhill to Loch Doon Here I halt

"Wot's up?" says he

"Nothing," says I, "except that I'm in the wrong man's country. It's Galloway, not Carrick, I should be in. So this is where I turn back by Loch Doon and you go on to Dalmellington and Ayr. So-long. It's truly a pity about your wee leggings. I'm heart-sorry they got wet. Cheerioh."

So we part. And as I set face to the branch road I carry away in my mind's eye the image of two little rosy calves, washed clean by the rain of all impurity, jogging along below the dripping tails of a coat of Newmarket cut.

About an hour's climb overhill brought me to the shallow glen at the top end of Loch Doon, and here, in an open glade of the pinewood that is a remnant of the mighty forest that formerly covered Carrick and Galloway, I thankfully unslung my pater.

Although by this time the rain had ceased, yet in its place arose a bitter wind which was fast freezing the clothes on my back and converting my blood into iced claret. Fire and shelter, therefore, were imperative.

A large square of canvas stuff, jettisoned, or forgotten probably, by gypsy folk, lying by the track, gave me an idea. Scouring the pinewood until I had collected half a dozen pliant wands taller than myself, I carried these to a flat-topped hillock, where I planted them upright and about a foot apart to form a semi-circular enclosure. Next I bent their top ends down and inward to a common centre, tying all firmly together with twine, and so had a skeleton framework over which I needed only to throw the canvas, weighting the bottom with stones, to make a shelter of beehive shape and hurricane-defying properties.

Because of the all-pervading wetness the fire

project proved more difficult. In the end, however, I overcame that likewise, and lost not a minute in stripping off my sodden, half-frozen clothing (in the pockets of the raincoat were four inches of water <sup>1</sup>), and setting it where it would dry. While as for the fires of my blood, do you know how I rekindled them? I stepped out naked during a sudden blatter of hail and let the hailstones ping at me till I glowed. For as fire puts out fire, so cold puts out cold.

Thereafter, with a rag about my middle, I prowled around hunting for wood, of which I collected a pile big enough to last all night. And believe me, it was just dandy going about among the pines in that wild place with nothing on. I felt like some prehistoric bloke. All I needed was a club in hand and two mammoths in the bush.

For here by Loch Doon it is really wild. It smacks of the authentic North. It doesn't belong, it is out of place, so low down on the map. Some old-time Sutherland Pict visiting his cousins in Galloway (of which Carrick aforetime formed part) must have carried it along once and left it behind. Because it could be set in the midst of the Sutherland barrens and fit right in, Quinag, Sulven, or Canisp—they wouldn't see any difference.

It is a long narrow loch, Loch Doon, except for a wide stretch near the top, also it has an islet or so. At the upper end the shores are mostly flat, barren moorland, but at the lower end considerable hills enclose and overshadow it. And as at this time these hills were covered with snow, and icy winds swept down from them, you can imagine how the place captivated me.

I remained there all that night, all the following day, Sunday, and left late in the forenoon of Monday.

During Sunday I did some exploring. Nearby I discovered a romantic glen, Ness Glen, through

which flows the infant Doon, Burns's Doon, which, needless to say, takes its name from the parent loch And I was scandalised to find that whoever it is that owns this lovely retreat has had the execrable taste, not to say impertinence, to erect an iron gate across the entrance Yes, and when I had climbed this and traversed the forbidden glen to the far end I found another iron gate !

This is the sort of thing that makes one want to organise organisations Why don't Scottish nature-lovers get together and form a society for the prevention of the spoliation of the countryside by landowners erecting gates, sticking up trespass and fire-prohibiting notices, felling trees, and leaving highly inflammable material lying about, and other acts tending to rouse the indignation of trampers, picnickers, and city dwellers generally ? A good name for such an organisation would be the Society for the Preservation of Rural Scotland

To return to my beehive hut On Sunday night, after a tempestuous morning and a calm, lovely evening, the rain began again, accompanied by sleet, hail, snow, and wind But through it all my shelter stood immovable As it was built upon a hillock the water ran off it down the sloping sides, thus dispensing with the need of my digging a surrounding gutter Hence, as the hut faced away from the wind and the fire burned in its lee, the night that followed was one of deep, cosy, and undisturbed repose

To get away from my beehive hut Late next morning I bade the piney glen farewell and took my way down the western shore of Loch Doon

Here I found more work for that suggested Society for the Preservation of Rural Scotland For on the shore of Loch Doon, ruining it scenically, are great hideous levels of concrete flooring, great hideous

blocks of concrete foundations, and great hideous stretches of tumbled brickwork and demolished hutments. And, judging by appearances, it has been like that for years and years, probably since the war!

Down the lochside I strode through hot sunshine, with a freezing wind at my back and occasional downplumps of hail belabouring me

Where the loch narrows and the hills close in I rested behind a dyke to watch a gang of navvies digging a drain, and to wonder why it is that most of us look down on toilers such as these on road-makers, bricklayers, dustmen, sewermen, and the like, without whom civilisation couldn't even begin to exist, yet look up to landowners men who have only inherited their money, traffickers in stocks and shares, and similar blokes who never work and who refuse to work, and without whom civilisation would be noticeably less barbarous

Between heather banks and thickets of gorse I continued on toward the foot of Loch Doon On my left, across the narrows, bulked the first mounts of Kells Range On my right, immediately above the track, hung a high ferny hill, and in front, far in the south, rose a wild jumble of desolate mountains culminating in Merrick, nearly 3000 feet high And all were snow-covered, and from the deep blue sky the sun blazed upon them, making them glitter and sparkle as though bediamonded

On reaching the foot of the loch I halted, swithering A sheepwalk led down to a footbridge across a rocky burn and ran round the end of the loch to the far shore I could follow that and then climb over the snow-covered range down to Carsphairn on the other side That was one way But the track I stood upon continued into the heart of the mountains to dear knows where That was another

way So, as a barrier stood across it bearing a notice which said *Blasting No Road*, I chose it in preference to the sheepwalk

Along the curving bank of the rocky burn it led me in a westerly direction But when I had gone a fair distance I halted and swithered once more Although the wilderness called and the high tops beckoned, still I knew it would be foolish to continue further For Galloway is such a pocket-size place that you have got to walk warily, and never go too far You can't journey for days through solitude to more solitude Tameness lurks round every bend, anti-climax waits at every corner And in this instance an anti-climax most farcical lay less than a day's walk to the west an anti-climax by the name of—Girvan !

Reluctantly, therefore, I retraced my steps to where the sheepwalk branched off, and, following it, crossed the footbridge, made the round of the end of the loch, and held on up the eastern shore towards a solitary farmhouse

A boy wearing an enormous pair of boots sat on a gate here, and him I accosted Says I

"How do I get to Carsphairn ? "

"Through yon nick between thae twa hulls, sir," he replied, indicating the saddle joining Black Craig and Coran of Portmark, whence the Polmeadow Burn tumbles to Loch Doon

"And after that ? "

"When ye win to the tap look awa' below and ye'll see whaur cairts go Follow this, sir, and it'll tak' ye to the leed mines And frae there there's a road richt into Carsphairn "

Big London bobbies from such little yokels grow

Thanking the boy, I lifted my eyes to the hills, and with a great rocky scar immediately under the

indicated saddle as a guide, I began climbing towards the snows

Halfway up I halted for the midday drum-up. As dining on a high hillside calls for a reversal of the customary process, I first made ready the eatables before beginning the preparation of the drinkables. For when heather is your fuel the lighting of the fire and the boiling of the drum demand uninterrupted supervision.

Taking the drum, therefore, I filled it at a spring, and, attaching to the handle a piece of cord, I hung the drum from the top of a flat-faced boulder and piled heather beneath it and round it, so that immediately the match was applied every particle of heat (and the heat from wind-fanned heather is intense) ascended to the suspended drum, boiling the water in less than five minutes. But I had to stand over it the while feeding the flames, because heather burns out ultra-rapidly and leaves behind no embers to speak of.

During the meal that followed the sun blazed on me from out a sky of frosty blue, while an icy wind set my blood on flame. Far away below lay Loch Doon, a-shimmer between its encompassing hills, and distance smoothing out to a motionless flatness its wave-furrowed surface. And as for the green islet with the castle on it, so high was I above it that I felt that a crust tossed down would drop into its keep.

Thereafter I resumed climbing and duly reached the snowline. It was thin snow, though, and camouflaged no peril. Nor were there even drifts to make things interesting. Consequently there is nothing of event to record of the subsequent scramble to the saddle.

Here, following a rest and a survey of the underlying scene, I turned my back on Loch Doon and

splashed across the spongy backbone of the range to the eastern side, where I could look down on the wilds of Carsphairn, and over, far over, to the heights of Cairnsmore

Carsphairn itself being still hidden from view by a bulge in the range, I worked round this in a steady descent and was rewarded ere long by the sight of the little hamlet nestling far under like an oasis in the desert of heath. Also the cart track, which the boy wearing the enormous boots had told me about, likewise came into view, and the old lead mines, and the road winding onward to Carsphairn

The descent to this was barely accomplished when from the west rolled great banks of gloom, blotting the range quite out, and hail and sleet and snow besomed me all the way into the village

Normally presenting a wind-swept appearance, Carsphairn now presented a tornado-ravaged ditto. Its bleakness froze my heart. Through its desolate street I blew with the blizzard and held on southward along the road to New Galloway

At intervals hereabouts little bits of pinewood border the way, dandy, picturesque places to camp in. And in the shelter of one of these stood a gypsy encampment, with yag, tan, jugal, grye, and keir vardo all complete. And a man and woman were squatting within the tan watching the blizzard, the man chinning the cost, and the woman—well, she was just chinning. And I halt and greet them

"*Koshti sarla*," says I to the man, and to the woman, "*Sar shun, meeri rawnie*?"

But they just sit and look out at me

"*Meeri deary Dovvel*!" says I. "*Can't you iokkra Romanes*?"

They look at each other

"Aren't youse twa gypsy bodies?" I then ask

The man finds his voice





## LAP THE THIRD

### THE WILDERNESS ROAD

New Galloway—Accosted—Coming the gorilla caper—" Out of what wistful land ?"—The *hunted* house—A creepy experience—Fear !—Into Newton Stewart

ALL night long from the heights of Kells Range a chill wind beat and beat and beat, never altering, never faltering, flowing like a tide over all the land. Nothing that I could do diverted from me its perishing stream, no break or bulwark that I could raise withstood its freezing wash. I had to lie in its path and let its ice-cold current pour over me as it listed, impotent and wide-awake till morning.

With sunrise came comparative warmth, but no abatement in the wind. I lighted a fire, breakfasted, shaved, and took the road, and shortly arrived in New Galloway.

I don't know whether the golden, azure morning had anything to do with it or not, but anyway this little one-street town delighted me. It looked exactly what I had imagined a Galloway town should look like, so I won't describe it, but shall leave it for you to imagine.

After laying in supplies and taking a turn along the clean, likeable street, I struck up a side lane and eventually came out on what is the pride of Galloway—the wilderness road to Newton Stewart.

This is reckoned to be the loneliest highway in the South-west. About sixteen miles long, stretching from the Ken to the Cree, it traverses for nearly

three-quarters of its length a forsaken area of rolling moorland. Climbing from New Galloway round the base of Cairnsmore of Dee, it switchbacks westward over a dark desert of bog and boulder, crosses Blackwater of Dee, speeds along through heather wilds, and, catching up with the Palnure Burn, penetrates in its company the barren glen under Milfore and Cairnsmore of Fleet, to pass out and down through a wide picturesque region of wood and pasture to Newton Stewart.

While skirting Cairnsmore of Dee in a broiling sun and freezing wind, before entering the wilderness proper, an out-of-work navvy accosts me, cadging fags. But I shake my head, and he passes on cursing. Five minutes aren't elapsed, though, when I grow aware of a shadow on the road behind my own—a shadow that treads stealthily on tiptoe and raises a stick on high to take a crack at me.

The situation called for swift thinking. How should I act? The navvy, I knew, was beside himself with privation, he would overcome me with ease. What should I do? Meet brute force with brute force, or come some caper? Yes! Some caper that would knock him cold, take him absolutely by surprise, something totally unexpected. But what? Quick, quick! Ah, I had it! The freezing wind had made me don my explorer's mittens, and as I walked along I had amused myself by working these down over my hands until they hung only by the wristbands, giving to my arms the appearance of abnormal, gorilla-like length. Gorilla-like! That was it! I would come the gorilla caper!

Almost as swift as these thoughts the navvy brings down his stick. But with a beast-like snarl of affected rage I spring forward and he misses. Then, instantaneously making my legs as bandy as they

will go and slipping the mittens down over my hands till they rest on the ground, I turn deliberately round with a leisurely waddling motion, and, grimacing and growling and slaving as much like an enraged gorilla as I know how, I confront the navy

*Tableau !*

His eyes bulge in his head, he lets fall the stick, and with a scream of fear—with a positive scream of mortal fear—the poor devil turns and pelts down that lonely road like two men and a wee fella

From then onward to Blackwater of Dee I was threading moorland uplands, where the hilly nature of the bordering countryside restricted the view. Though the roughness of the road made the miles appear interminable, yet the keen wind in company with the ardent sun effectively kept fatigue and boredom at bay. The barbaric colouring of the wilderness, too, afforded me continued delight. So intense and alive were the reds, browns, yellows, blues, and blacks, that they flickered like flames, as though the moors were afire. And as I walked entranced amid this conflagration of tint and hue I declaimed with the poet

“ But this is holy ground  
For him who heavenward turns ,  
Miraculous, unconsumed,  
The hill-bush burns ”

In time I came to Blackwater of Dee. Here at last was wildness, barrenness, savageness, in satisfying quantities. I was in my element. Black bogs and boulder-strewn wastes lay all about. Out of the dim north from the back of the Minnigaffs, or the Back o' Beyond it might have been, the Blackwater came winding and spreading in innumerable little falls and rapids along its tortuous rocky bed

of dark granite And into the dim south, down a far vista of lifeless moor and fell, it flowed forlorn, a sad stream mournfully murmuring

"Out of what land, O Dee?" quoth I, leaning over the rough bridge and looking down "Out of what wistful land?"

And haltingly the Dee seemed to babble back, in tones as pathetic and disconsolate as those of Aikendrum, and, like him, with a haunting simplicity it could only say

"I lived in a lan' where we saw nae sky,  
I dwalt in a spot where a burn rins na by"

In the vicinity, navvies were busy cutting a new road, and they must have been a superior lot of navvies, because instead of ordinary push-bikes lying by the wayside I saw more than a score of—what do you think? Posh motor-bicycles

Crossing the bridge, I journeyed on through the burning noon under the Rig of Drumwhar, rejoicing in the stone-littered desolation, a minor Moor of Rannoch, that here lies about the bases of Round Fell and Fell of Fleet And as I journeyed I kept picking up bits of wood which the navvies had left, and looking for a suitable spot to drum-up in

But before such a spot hove in sight my feet had to suffer the agony of having three miles of scorching roadway pass under their tender soles Nor could they have felt hotter had I taken them off and held them pressed close against a turning grindstone

The spot I am talking about is near where the Corse Burn weds the upper waters of the Palnure Burn At first sight it looked an ideal place, but picture my disgust when I found that other people had got there long enough before me to build themselves a house

I fumed Talking to myself, I limped in a rage

past the house, eyeing it ferociously But—wait a minute This was strange The chimneys weren't smoking, the windows were curtainless, the door stood ajar Maybe—— Yes, by heaven, what downright luck, the house was empty!

Hobbling over I peered in through the blank panes to the sunlit interior Except for a grate, an old iron bedstead, a mattress, and littered rubbish, the place was empty all right But on the wall opposite the window I saw something that sent a cold thrill through me In big capital letters there was chalked these ominous words *THE HUNTED HOUSE*

In spite of this, though, I pushed wide the door and entered After all, thought I, if the ghost haunted as amateurishly as it spelled there was nothing to be scared of

An abundance of paper lay around, and as I still carried the bits of wood I had picked up along the road I lost no time lighting a fire in the grate and putting on my drum Then while waiting for this to boil I noseyed around and made further discoveries

That the house was used by tramps as a skyypper was easily seen by the pencilled scribblings on the shutters Witty sayings and scraps of philosophy were there, and a poem beginning, "Ye lazy tramps of Scotland, who shelter in this house——" Above the fireplace, too, was scrawled "Rest and be thankful" So to these I added my monica, writing, "Here, 12th day of April, 1932, dinner was partaken of by Tramp-Royal, of notorious memory" Furthermore, on a slate placed on the window-ledge I read, "Notice to Travellers This end is occupied by a lambing shepherd" And lastly, in the middle of the floor a couple of silver eggspoons lay crossed, whether accidentally or as a charm against ghosts I can't say

Smile if you like, but let me tell you that dining here was a creepy experience For if there is any-

thing eerier than being alone in a haunted house at dead of night, with moonlight flooding the place, it is being alone in the same house at high noon with brilliant shafts of sunlight slanting through Silence in a house at midnight is natural, but at mid-day it puts the wind up one.

It put the wind up me, at anyrate In the unnatural quiet I sat eating, ears cocked for the slightest noise But the rustling of the flames in the fire was the only—— Wheesht ! What was that ? From behind me, outside at the back, came the soft sound of trailing feet and beast-like snuffling What the devil was it ? A ghost ? Or a—a brownie ? Good heavens, what if somebody were to come the brownie caper on me the same as I had come the gorilla caper on yon navvy, eh ? What if some strange wight were to come gliding ben with a dreary, dreary hum, like the Brownie o' Blednoch, like Aiken-drum, eh ? What if—Lord love me, I could almost see him

“ His matted head on his breast did rest,  
A lang blue beard wan'ered down like a vest ,  
But the glare o' his e'e nae bard hath exprest,  
Nor the skimes o' Aiken-drum !

Roun' his hairy form there was naething seen  
But a philabeg o' the rashes green ,  
And his knotted knees played aye knoit between ,  
What a sight was Aiken-drum !

On his wauchie arms three claws did meet  
As they trailed on the grun' by his taeless feet ,  
E'en the——”

But the taeless feet were more than I could stomach , these, and the wauchie arms Springing up and feverishly packing my kit before any goblin could get me, I decamped instanter from that haunted house

For it was haunted, all right, as all haunted houses are haunted—by Fear!

A mile or so later the road swerved sharply to the right and brought me to where a monument on a green hill stands lonely in the wilds. This is the Murray Monument. Just before it, though, at the head of a ferny dell in the shadow of Fell of Talnotry, a romantic fall, the Grey Mare's Tail, tumbles from the hill. So up the mossgrown path I went, stripped in a trice, and, plunging into the black waters of the profound pool immediately below the fall, swam myself back to sanity. Then I climbed the green hill to the monument.

It is a granite obelisk this, supported on a square base, and nearly a hundred feet tall. It was erected to honour the memory of Alexander Murray, D.D., minister of Urr and Professor of Oriental Languages in the University of Edinburgh, who (think of it!) was reared a shepherd boy on these hills. And the view you get from its base is an inspiring one. The Pictish wilderness is spread all about—an unrelieved desert of standing stone and waving heath, soaring forment to compose the spacious sky-shouldering summits of Craignelder, Meikle Multaggart, and Cairnsmore of Fleet.

For long I sat brooding over the scene, fascinated as I always am by desolation, and strangely stirred. Then in the late afternoon I descended from the hill to fare westward up a long steep rise of road, at the top of which is to be glimpsed in the far south the yellow of Wigtown Sands, and beyond, the blue of Solway.

The few miles remaining between here and Newton Stewart I rapidly put underfoot. The countryside held no appeal. Those Lowland woods and fields and farms gave me the willies. I was glad, therefore, when in the gathering twilight I at length crossed Cree Bridge and came into the town of Newton Stewart.



## LAP THE FOURTH

### THE ROAD TO THE RHINNS

Drawing everybody's gaze—A pukka howff—The Jolly Beggars—Females of the species—Topics—The Dominie bloke—Blushing policemen—The police brain—The packman and his mort—At the Halfway House—Old Pew—In Glenluce

NEWTON STEWART consists of an irregular street straggling for nearly a mile along the west bank of Cree. And as I strode up it, admiring what is a cheery little place when the shops are open, I drew everybody's gaze. And it was only when I was making my way down again that I hit on the reason for this. So accustomed had I grown to holding the crown of country roads, and so completely had I forgotten what pavements were for, that, through sheer force of habit, I was promenading in the very middle of the street!

Feeling chumpish all over, I sought the sidewalk and enquired of a bloke afflicted with blinking eyes if there was a kip in Newton Stewart.

"A kip?" said he, his optics going nineteen to the dozen, "Oh, you mean a ludging-hoose. Well, the only one I ken about is a woman's up a lane. She takes ludgers now and again. Come on and I'll show you."

On arriving at this woman's up a lane the bloke leaves me, and I climb up an outside stair to what I discover is a pukka howff, or padding ken.

At the starhead I am met by a little undersized runt in shirtsleeves who says he is the deputy. So him I ask about a bed.

"No," says he, shaking his head, "I'm afraid no', mister Ye've cam' ower late A' the beds is booked a'readies But—haud on! How about a shake-doon? When I mind, noo, there's a tike and bowster ye can hae, and a coupla blankets Will that no' do ye just as weel, mister?"

"Sure!" says I "Onything at a'," and paying eightpence to the deputy I enter the howff

This is a long barn-like structure that serves the triple purpose of kitchen, dining-room, and smoke-room At the far end, in a huge old-fashioned fireplace fitted with dogs and swivel-cran, burns a coke fire a foot deep and four feet wide, flanked on both sides by racks holding a plentiful assortment of pots, pans, kettles, and crockery for the lodgers' use, and, while tables and benches occupy the rest of the room, encompassing the hearth at a comfortable distance are ranged three low forms, on which sit characters that would delight a Hogarth or a Cruickshank and might pass for the originals of Burns's *Jolly Beggars*

Unslinging my peter at one of the tables, I set about getting myself a meal, and in going to and from the fireplace I have ample opportunity to study my fellow-lodgers

The first that attracts my attention is a one-man band He came in ahead of me, and fairly bristles with instruments From his back hangs a drum, from either elbow sticks out the head of a drum-stick fastened to the forearm, on the inside of each knee a small cymbal is strapped, at his mouth, supported on a stick attached in a complicated manner to his neck, is a mouth-organ, in one hand he holds a steel cleek, in the other a steel triangle By simply behaving like a bloke with St Vitus' dance he can produce the devil of a racket something between a cinema organ out of tune and a

jazz band out of its mind. Also, perched on his hat, which has bells on it, is a tame jackdaw.

"Four 'oors I jingled, mind ye," he is explaining to all and sundry, "four 'oors o' steady, conscientious jingling, and no sae much as a curdie flung me. Four 'oors!"

On the same form as this lad sits an old geezer in a dirty coat reaching to his ankles, and a dirtier beard reaching to his waist. Being too independent to use the fireplace like the rest of us, this joker is doing his cooking—a fry-up of bread and dripping—in the lid of a biscuit tin, which he holds over a candle flame with the aid of a pair of pliers. And next him a working tramp, a Brummie with a pin leg, is engaged doctoring his sound foot, from which he has unrolled a yard-long toe-rag, pulling noisily the while at a pipeful of cigar-stubs and fag-ends most pungent. And occasionally he will stop to insert a hand under his armpit and thoughtfully claw himself.

"If you're sae crummy as a' that, man," the old geezer is saying to Brummie, "why the de'il do ye no' tak' aff your shirt and wash it!"

"Because then," says Brummie, "it wouldn't get on your nerves, Beaver. See?"

On another form a packman and his mort are telling each other off. Beside them a dishwife keeps up a whispered conversation, which can be heard out in the lane, with an old brushwife. Her eyes are like sloes, her teeth like pearls, her skin is like a toad's, and from her ears dangle long glass pendants that shoot red, blue, green, purple, and lavender fire every time they shake. Her confidante smokes a short clay pipe and spits through her teeth with perfect aim.

"And ye dune richt, Fanny woman," the latter is saying. "Ye dune richt no' to let the gudewife

hae the ashet forbye The hauf-set o' floored cheeny was mair nor ample, I'm thinking Losh, aye "

The third form at the fire supports a sturdy beggar Well over six feet, broad of shoulder, deep of chest, he is the soul of the howff He tells the company that he has tramped the roads since he was born It's the life, he says His rugged face is tanned and his laugh is the heartiest in the world, when he laughs the rafters shake and everybody laughs with him You would seek in vain in the most exclusive clubs of Society for a multi-millionaire who could laugh like him He is cobbling a pair of bachles for the price of his kip

His neighbour is a blind beggar, with dog and tinnie He has the audacity to come round for a collection, and when only a mark and a wing are forthcoming he curses like Old Pew

"If this is a sample o' Christian charity," says he, spitefully hitting out at our shins as he taps his way back to the form, "then thank God I'm a heathen Jew!"

On the same form sits something that I find hard to accept as real It is a lanky old weather-beaten tramp, gaunt, unshaven, and lantern-jawed, who speaks to nobody, nor of whom nobody seems to know anything And he is dressed in full clerical rig!

Yes, he is togged up like a minister in low-crowned round hat, in black coat and trousers, and in a vest with a square opening in the collar where a choker should show Only, he hasn't got a choker His big sunburnt throat, with a big adam's apple working up and down in the middle, takes the place of a choker And he reminds me of the Dominie in Scott's *Guy Mannering*, and I feel that I am fated to meet him again sometime, elsewhere

By the time I have finished supper the women

are all retired, so we menfolk take advantage of the silence to gather round the fire and swap yarns. The great Silks Trial comes in first for discussion, then the Lindbergh kidnapping, then the Rector of Stiffkey and Barbara, and Burke and Hare, Dr Crippen, Palmer the poisoner, Charlie Peace, Jack the Ripper, besides topics such as women, the Government, the dole, Parliament, Irish sweepstakes, women, the House of Commons, birth control, Labour Members, women, the Means Test, women, the British Constitution, women, Disarmament, women, women, women. Then somebody begins talking about how people ought to be governed, so the conversation switches over to politics, women, diplomacy, women, statesmanship, women, women, women, and women.

Time ticks away, the fire sinks low, and around midnight the deputy turns the light down and us out. Supplying me with bedding, he shows me into a tiny cam-ceiled chamber, where Brummie and the one-man band are to occupy a double-bed while I lie on the floor. And there I pass as restful a night as could be expected.

In the morning, not too early, I descended to the kitchen and had breakfast. The packman, his mort, and the dishwife were the only ones there, though as I was leaving I bumped into the Dominie bloke, who had just got up.

"Hello!" said I, passing out.

"Hello!" said he, passing in. And as our eyes met I felt for the second time that I was fated to meet him again sometime, elsewhere.

Newton Stewart, I found, had hardly got its shutters off or its front door steps cleaned. Few folk were stirring. A miserable soaking rain swept the long straggling high street as I strode down it, and the aspect of the Minnigaff heights, which fill

the sky to the northward, was such that I turned my back on them very willingly

At the end of the street the road branches. While one branch continues south for Wigtown and Whit-horn, the other fares west for Glenluce and Stranraer. And here stood two middle-aged policemen, who focused on me as I approached their joint scrutiny, desperately but vainly endeavouring to cudgel their brains into a state of thought. Who was I? What was I? Why was I? It was no good, though. Obviously, they couldn't deduce from my appearance what I was. Nor was enlightenment vouchsafed them until a wee lassie of four or five years came toddling from a nearby house, and, seeing me, immediately struck up in derision, *I'm Happy When I'm Hiking*.

The policemen blushed for very shame.

And as I turned west from Newton Stewart along the road to Glenluce, with the descending rain reminding me of R A F pilots hurtling to their stupid deaths, I considered the phenomenon of blushing policemen.

I recalled the various occasions when I had watched the plump cheeks, fat necks, and baby brows of station sergeants flame like fire. For station sergeants, you must know, are inordinately vain men, with leanings toward waxed moustaches and dandified modes of coiffure. And as their vanity is great so is their knowledge little. Their mistakes in spelling, slips in grammar, errors in composition—point out these on your charge-sheet the next time you are charged, gentle reader, and you will see the red tide rise, because in their profound ignorance they deem knowledge of ignorance a shameful thing, whereas, as you and I know, it is the beginning and the end of wisdom.

To continue. Having crossed the Cree, I was now

in Wigtownshire, or West Galloway, which, like Cæsar's Gaul, is divisible into three parts the Rhinns, the Moors, and the Machars. The Rhinns, or promontories, comprise the Mull of Galloway, the Moors are the uplands below the Carrick border, and the Machars, or plains, compose the greater part of the Whithorn peninsula in the south.

Have you ever wondered why policemen invariably walk with head stiff and erect, or why when they stoop their features become suffused with blood? Have you ever suspected any connection between these two simple oddities? If not, I'll let you in on the secret. It's this. When a man joins the Force, that is to say, when he degenerates into the policeman state, his brain automatically atrophies and becomes detached from the brain-pan in the process. Hence the reason for the erect carriage of the head peculiar to the cop, it's so that the dried-up brain won't roll about and cause cerebral inflammation. And hence, likewise, the reason for the features becoming suffused with blood each time the patient stoops, it's because he's blushing. And why does he blush? Well, wouldn't you blush if you felt a dead brain rolling about inside your skull like a pea in a whistle, eh? Och, sure!

To continue again. The Newton Stewart-Glenluce road, which I was now travelling, runs the gauntlet of the Moors and the Machars on its way to the Rhinns. In all its sixteen miles of length scenery is conspicuous by its absence. Lifeless levels, tame flats, colourless flows, or mosses, with occasional wooded bits relieving the dullness, are the wayfarer's portion. So that here, on this day of intermittent drizzle and sunless skies, the epithet *Grey Galloway* was peculiarly applicable.

And this lamentable atrophy of the police brain is accelerated beyond measure when the possessor dons

plain clothes and turns sleuth, as was demonstrated last year at the investigation of the Vera Page murder. For you will remember, my dear Watson, that on that occasion, Scotland Yard, in order to procure one normal thinking brain equal to the task of elucidating the affair, was compelled to impose one upon the other the brains of no fewer than 200 detectives—200 *picked* detectives. And even then the composite brain resulting from this monstrous superimposition fell ludicrously short of expectations. For it was found to be not a normal thinking brain, but merely a normal police brain. And so the Vera Page murder became the Vera Page mystery.

Again to continue—in earnest this time. Onward through the tameness I plodded listlessly, halting at times to turn round and refresh my eyes with a sight of the Kirkcudbrightshire mountains far away, or else to rest in a sheltered place where I would smoke and read a chapter out of *Trader Horn*.

During one of these rests whom should I see coming along the road but the packman and his mort—the two I had met in the howff in Newton Stewart. And so busy were they arguing the toss and telling each other off, that they would have passed me had I not called to them.

“Weel met!” returns the packman, coming across and standing over me. “Now we’ll see who’s richt or wrang. Jean here,” he goes on, indicating his companion, “she hauds that the beds were clean, and me, I haud that they werena. Now, who’s richt? She says there’s something the matter wi’ my bluid, but I ken fine there’s no’. It was the beds, mate, wasn’t it?”

I had resource to evasion.

“I’m sorry, chum, but I can’t tell you. You see, I didn’t sleep in a bed, they were a’ booked. I slept on the floor.”



"Aye? Man, that was hard cheese But—here, what gait are ye gaun? To Glenluce? Then come on and we'll gi'e ye a buttie as faur's the Halfway Hoose There's a drumming-up station thereabouts Now, as I was saying——"

To the Halfway House, then, I was their buttie And when we reached the drumming-up station, which stood in the midst of a neighbouring planting, we found a fire ready waiting for us, a fire lit by a couple of young Carlisle chaps, of whom one was playing on the melodeon that they had been tramping the Rhinns with So we joined them

"Jean," says the packman, after the drum-up, "how about a sang? How about *Ca' the Yowes*?"

But Jean was coy The melodeon player, however, wasn't He gave us not only *Ca' the Yowes*, but *The Wells o' Wearie*, followed by *The Auld Quarry Knowe*, *The Bush abune Traquair*, *Gentle Annie*, *When You Gang Awa'*, *Jamie*, *Down the Burn*, *'Twas Within a Mile*, *O Rowan Tree*, and mony anither sang of the kind that mithers used to sing when mithers were mithers and not just tuners-in to mammy-songs and bedtime stories

In such fashion the afternoon wore away until the road called "Time!", at which we rose and bade each other so-long, the melodeon player and his china making for Newton Stewart, the packman and his mort striking off down a lane, and I, alone once more, faring westward for Glenluce

Though the rain had ceased yet the sun remained obscured and skies hung heavy and low The featureless levelness of the countryside, too, still persisted So it was with thankfulness that I sat down for a final rest by the roadside about a quarter of a mile short of Glenluce

I hadn't been sitting long when a tapping noise made me look up from *Trader Horn*, and behold!

there was Old Pew, the blind beggar of the Newton Stewart howff, tapping his way along the crown of the road, towed by his dog

When they came abreast of me the dog, a sleek-eyed collie, stopped and began growling Whereat his master, cocking his ears and gazing sightlessly round in every direction, demanded, "What's it now, Rab? What's it now? A rabbit?"

"No," I broke in, "it's just a bloke on the Toby having a bit rest afore going into the village"

"Glenluce, do you mean? Ah, I thought we ought to be coming to it soon. You were in Newton Stewart kip last night I remember your voice"

"Sure I say, is there a kip in Glenluce?"

"There was one the last time I was there Belonged to a fellow called the Mad Sodger"

"Are you going there now?"

"Well, blast my skin if that isn't the flaming limit! What the devil has that got to do with you! Mind your own cursed business!" and, blasting and blinding, he hauled off Rab and tapped his way furiously into the village

Following in his footsteps later on in the twilight, I found Glenluce to be a little grey one-street place, scarcely changed, I should think, since Borrow visited it, where the only evidence of human habitation consisted of a solitary villager leaning dreaming against a gable-end

"Chum," says I, buttonholing this yokel, "whereabouts is the Mad Sodger's?"

"It isnae naewhere noo," was the reply "They shut it up twa-three months back The nearest ludging-hoose is ten miles awa' in Stranraer Is there onything else ye'd like to ken afore the rain starts?"

There was, but before I could open my mouth the rain started, the bloke skedaddled, and I was

left standing in the midst of the darkening village, alone except for a copper who had mysteriously materialised from out the back door of an inn and was now intently watching me, posed in an attitude that said louder than words

“What now, Tramp-Royal? Think quick One false move and I’ve got ye!”

There being only one thing I could do, I did it I cut the Gordian knot With a gait as royal as only tramps know how I sailed up the street past the copper, and, tacking to port, conned my way into the haven of an hotel, where, finding that the harbour-dues were not exorbitant, I dropped anchor for the night

For in the world of the Toby there are doors of escape into other worlds, faults in the atmosphere, so to speak, through which the venturesome with pocket lined can win to countries infinitely more futile and Utopian than ever a Butler or a Wells fabricated

I mean hotel doors

## LAP THE FIFTH

### THROUGH THE RHINNS

Bay of Luce—Mechanised minds—Stranraer—The man-beast of Benerard—Cannibalism—Dunskey Castle—*Das Schloss am Meer*—Two incidents—Port Logan—The Fish-pond—An angry critic—"Oh, well"—Tramp-Royal by Tramp-Royal—The Mull of Galloway—Heather ale—Bumping off—A secret place—Galloway at a glance—On Torrs Warren—Real gypsies—*The trushul*—Like Truth

ALL night the rain poured, and it was not until late next morning that the weather fined sufficiently for me to resume the road to the Rhinns

Immediately after leaving Glenluce I came upon the romantic wooded dell down which rushes Luce Water to empty itself into the great Bay of Luce And further on, where the view opens out, I beheld the immensity of this bay as it stretches far into the south, bounded on one side by the long low line of the Rhinns, terminating in the light-tower on the Mull, and on the other by the equally long low line of the Machars And between the uttermost points of these two arms the dim blue ghost of Man haunted the horizon

Also, fringing the head of the bay I beheld that rabbit-infested wilderness of tufted dunes, that blasted heath known as Torrs Warren, where on a night to come I was to have my fortune spaed by three weird gypsy sisters

While I journeyed westward past Dunragit toward Castle Kennedy, the rain ceased and the sun burst from the blue, obliging me to discard both raincoat

and jacket for coolness sake And as I tripped onward through the heavenly weather I was pestered almost to madness by licensed manslaughterers—I mean motorists—pulling up, one after another, to make the odious suggestion that I should jump in

“But I don’t want a lift!” I cried, to one more persistent than the rest “I don’t want a lift. I’ve got a pair of legs, and they work, and I like walking. Can’t you understand?”

Not he He wouldn’t and couldn’t understand And each time I return to the Toby I find fewer motorists do understand So mechanised are their minds becoming that they are actually beginning to look on walking as something unnatural And if this deplorable mechanisation continues at its present rate, the time is not far off when a walker will evoke as much astonishment and wonder as did the first horseless carriage. Yes, in the near future a legless generation will point and cry “Look! Yonder’s a man—and *he’s walking on his feet!*”

At Castle Kennedy the straight, smooth, broad road runs for a considerable way through unfenced woodlands The conifers hereabouts, too, rival those in Glen Aray at Inveraray, and altogether it is a very pleasant countryside But about the people dwelling here there is that feudal slavishness of bearing that characterises, and stigmatises, all tenants of lords, earls, and dukes You can see that they are, without exception, snobs, toadies, touchcaps people beyond the pale, just as the lairds, those descendants of robbers and land-grabbers and claim-jumpers, and also the lawyers and magistrates who practice and uphold the Law, which was made solely for the preservation of the power and property of the lairds, are people beyond the pale

All the way into Stranraer the splendid weather prevailed. But hardly had I entered the town than the gold faded from the day, the blue sky veiled itself, a thin rain began falling, and, to add to the agony, every single shop clapped on its shutters and the entire place forthwith assumed that dead, deserted, funereal aspect which, paradoxically enough, is the customary aspect of Scottish towns on half-holidays.

Stranraer, however, couldn't look festive if it tried. It's terrible. The ugliest, most gosh-awful town in Scotland—that's Stranraer. Its beautiful situation, moreover, at the head of Loch Ryan in the shelter of low green hills, serves but to accentuate its ugliness. It's terrible. On the cinder-strewn esplanade, where grass and moss are let grow and the railings are eaten away with rust, and where in an English coast town would be a *palais de danse* or a *café de luxe*, there is a gasometer. I repeat, a gasometer. It's terrible. And jutting out from the esplanade into the waters of the loch, where an ornamental pier ought to be, well, there's a pier all right, but it's the dirtiest, most unpicturesque pier that ever was, with dingy sheds, a drab signal box, coal-laden trucks, rattling cranes, shunting engines. And the principal street is a straggling lane at the back of the front, with an old castle crammed away out of sight at the top of an alleyway. It's terrible. The ugliest, most gosh-awful town in Scotland—that's Stranraer.

As I sat on the esplanade munching biscuits and letting the rain soak me, my mind followed the eastern shore of Loch Ryan up past Carnryan to Glenapp, and thence, over the Braes o' Glenapp, ever northward, along the pleasant Carrick shore, past Ballantrae and Lendalfoot to Turnberry and Culzean, where in the coves, or caves, of Culzean

below Culzean Castle, I once on a time lived a cave-man life And thought of those coves reminded me of Crockett's book, *The Grey Man*, which deals with that coast, and as I sat I considered the singular case of a character in that book Sawny Bean, the man-beast of Benerard

Monstrous of form, with cloven feet that left prints like a beast's, and long hairy arms clawed at the finger-ends like a beast's, he was a cannibal, was Sawny. He and his gruesome gang, after butchering folk, haled the bodies off to a cave in Bennanbrack Head and cooked and ate them And here is Crockett's description of that cave

" We had hardly been in this place a few moments when a strangely persistent and pervading smell began to impress us with the deadliest loathing It was sharp, pungent, and familiar I chanced to put down my hand when my foot struck something, and lo ! to my horror I touched the side of a wooden tub or vat - It was a murderous, uncanny abode, where at every step I took something strange swept across my face or slithered clammy along my cheek, making me grue to my very bone marrows These vague shapes, shrunk and blackened, which hung in rows like hams and black puddings set to dry, these poor relics were no other than the parched arms and legs of men and women who had once walked the upper earth, but who by misfortune had fallen into the power of this hideous, inconceivable gang of monstrous man-eaters I felt something touch my cheek, and lo ! it was a little babe's hand that swung by a cord "

Equals anything in Rider Haggard, eh ? Amazing, isn't it ? Yes, but not so amazing as the fact that Sawny Bean and his cannibal crew, instead of being

mere creatures of fiction, actually existed in Carrick once upon a time, in the flesh !

Yet, I don't know Are we such hypocrites as to go on pretending that we hold life sacred, or that cold-blooded butchery amazes us ? What of the years between '14 and '18 when douce, respectable, church-going nations swilled the world with one another's blood ? And cannibalism—aren't you and I and all of us cannibals ? Don't we kill and eat our kind ? our earthborn kind ? Isn't the housewife who pops a new-laid egg into a pan of boiling water equally a cannibal with the savage who pops into his cauldron a missionary ? Isn't the vegetarian eating a green pea on a plate as much a corpse-eater as he who eats roast beef ? For a green pea on a plate is a corpse even as a boiled egg, a slaughtered bullock, a stewed missionary It was born, it lived, it died And if man with his inconceivably monstrous, bloody, and barbarous past has a soul, why not also the innocent green pea on the plate ? And if the pea's soul isn't an immeasurably higher type of soul than man's, then, by heaven, it ought to be !

From Stranraer I went to Portpatrick A seven-mile walk this is, up and over the breezy backbone of the Rhinns among green hills reminiscent of Devon, and as you drop down the steep descent to the little port, with the blue horizon stretched like a tightrope high and taut above the clustered roofs, it is as though you were emerging on the sea from a Devoncombe

Portpatrick is the neatest little place In shape it is not unlike a capital Y which has had its angular top replaced by a semicircle, the supporting leg representing the steep main street and the diverging arms the harbour front



But although neat and clean-swept, it was dead—dead as mutton. And on the shapely crescent of its landlocked little anchorage I was the only living soul. So, after a leisurely inspection of the lighthouse at the harbour mouth, I climbed the cliff path to the south of the village, and, treading the narrow gangway where the railway runs in a deep chasm on the left and the sea dashes in deep chasms on the right, I shortly came to a romantic old ruined castle.

This is Dunskey Castle. It stands on a bold rocky crag commanding the wide ocean, with sheer drops on its seaward sides and a moat isolating it to landward. In its heyday, when garrisoned, it must have been well nigh impregnable. There is a ground floor with two upper storeys, all pretty well intact. Far below, too, opening on the wild rocky beach at the foot of the crag, the black mouth of a cave hints at underground passages. And this sent my memory back to Merlin's Cave under Tintagel by the Cornish sea.

But by now evening stood on the threshold of night. The disk of the sun as it dropped horizonward had drained from the western heavens all colour, so that, while on either side of the dazzling path thereunder the sea gleamed deeply, darkly, coldly blue, the sky glowed incandescent. Then as the nether rim of the sun kissed the blazing sea-line, fire of sun and sea fused in a blinding, nebulous mass of golden gorgeour, and it was sunset. And a dark wind blew at the embers of the stars till they burned and shone and made radiant the face of the waters, and it was night.

And me? I was watching all this seated in the doorway of a black dungeon, where I had unslung my pack and laid down bracken for a bed. And as I watched I asked myself, in the words of Uhland—

*" Hast du das Schloss gesehen,  
Das hohe Schloss am Meer ?  
Golden und rostig wehen  
Die Wolken drüber her "*

And, although I had seen neither the moon standing over this castle by the sea, nor any trace of mist, yet I replied—

*" Wohl hab' ich es gesehen,  
Das hohe Schloss am Meer,  
Und den Mond darüber stehen  
Und Nebel weit umher "*

Then into the pitch-black dungeon I retreated to lie thinking morbidly about the mother in the legend of Dunskey Castle who, having seen her baby tumble from a window to its death far below, threw herself after it. Then, praying to be delivered from long-legged beasties and things that go bump in the night, I fell asleep.

Next day was fine and very warm. All morning in the clammy heat I toiled southward from Dunskey, at first walking along the clifftop and later threading the network of roads and diverging paths which make of the Rhinns a maze and labyrinth. My bump of locality, fortunately, didn't let me down. It served me as the clue of Ariadne served Theseus. Past Cornish-like sea-vistas and over Devonshire-like uplands it guided my feet eastward out on to the great beaches of Luce Bay, and thence, by way of Ardwell and Chapel Rossan inland again and across to Port Logan.

I'm running ahead of myself, though. I nearly forgot two incidents that occurred while threading the maze. The first one was at a wayside school where the pupils, fifty or more, were just coming out. And no sooner did they catch sight of me than they stopped as one, and, in utter silence, fixed

upon me their gaze till I was gone past, when, again as one, they burst into that song of derision which had been sung for my benefit before, and now made me slink away feeling like a cur with a tin tied to its tail that song, *I'm Happy When I'm Hiking*

The second incident was this When skirting the foot of a ploughed field I heard a shout and saw a ploughman wave his hand excitedly and come leaping across the furrows toward me, whereupon I halted, and on his arrival, all breathless and with about a hundredweight of mould clinging to either boot, he gasped

"Wait! I've got one! Get out your ten-bob note!"

I looked at him

"You've got one what? Why should I get out a ten-bob note?"

"Because I've got one Here it is!"

He had been struggling to get something out of his pocket, and he now produced it a matchbox wrapped in tissue paper

"What's that?" I asked

"Oh, don't kid me! Ye ken fine what it is Come on, out with your ten-bob note!"

Beginning to think that I had stumbled upon some sort of dope-trafficking, I took the box wonderingly and looked at the design and trade mark, then I understood It was that brand of match, the makers of which send out canvassers who are supposed to present a ten-shilling note to anyone whom they find in possession of a box

"I'm sorry," I said, laughing and handing the ploughman his box "You see, I'm not the match-man"

"Man," said he, earnestly searching my face, "are you sure? You're not just kidding me, are you? I've been saving this box for months, and I

can't sleep at nights for thinking and planning what I'll do with the ten-bob note when—if I ever get it My-oh-my So you're not the match-man, after all? Ah, well This wee box is fast greying my head, and'll bring it soon in sorrow to the grave My-oh-my" And he turned away sorrowfully

By the time I had eaten a much-belated midday meal in a pinewood in the neighbourhood of Ardwell, and walked into Port Logan, it was early evening

Port Logan is a sad, gloomy hole The front windows of the long row of houses comprising it look across a dark, narrow, sunken, ditch-like lane into the high blank side of a sea-wall built directly in front of them, blocking out both sea-view and daylight And this sea-wall, I was told, was built years ago by a laird for that very purpose to block out both sea-view and daylight, and so drive the villagers from their homes But as the sea-wall proved a most efficient shelter in winter storms, the villagers stayed where they were, some clapping an extra storey to their cottages, and so foiled the laird in his dirty work

Round the bay from the village is the celebrated Fish-pond This is a deep, dark well of a place into which the guide and you, like jailer and prisoner *en route* for the condemned cell, descend by a flight of steps hewn out of the rock And at the foot you find yourself on the edge of a profound, rippleless pool of green sea-water, in whose gloomy and mysterious depths vague forms, which you make out to be those of large fish, come swimming rapidly to your very feet And these fish are tame, so tame, indeed, that they lift their heads and half their bodies out of the pool, begging for the limpets and other titbits which the guide holds out to them, and which they eat from his hand like dogs—like greedy, big-mouthed dogs—snapping at one another,

and at you, too, if you try to get over-familiar with them. Then, the limpets gobbled, they retire to the depths, and you mount with the guide to sign the visitors' book.

In the soundless twilight I turned my back on Port Logan, and, heading inland, sped rapidly across the silent, darkening land, till all of a sudden the airs of a vast emptiness smote me, and I came out on the wild, thundering, moonlit beaches of the great Bay of Luce.

Here for a time I stood looking out over the lonely waters. Then, turning southward down the main road, which follows the shore-line all the way into Drummore—still about a league distant—I put my fastest foot forward.

It was great, but eerie, too, walking by those solitary beaches, with the wind blowing, the surf flying, and the boom and crash of breakers echoing and re-echoing, as in a vast hall, beneath the lofty stars, and the witching moonfire glancing along the crests of toppling combers, veining the luminous jade of the waves with opal and mother of pearl. It was like walking along a beach of dreams in a golden age in the morning of the world, before thought had come to man to make him thoughtless.

Halfway to Drummore I overtook a bloke, a hiker, with rucksack on back. Having heard my footsteps, he was halted in a sweat of impatience, obviously waiting to unbosom himself of things weighing on his mind. In his hand was a book which he thrust at me.

"Look at that," he commanded, "and tell me if you've read it. I'd like your opinion on the author. I've been reading it all day, and it has angered me as no book I've read has ever done."

Taking the book and examining it by the bright light of the moon, I saw that it consisted of a col-

lection of travel articles and poems, which had formerly appeared in a newspaper called *The Evening Times*, written by one Tramp-Royal

"Now that's strange," said I, falling into stride, "but I do happen to have read this book The author——"

"The author is the most conceited, boastful, swelled-headed egoist who ever wrote!"

"Do you think so?"

"Do I *think*——!!! " The bloke waxed inarticulate

"Well," I said, thumbing the leaves, "let's see what this most conceited, boastful, swelled-headed egoist has to say"

"In the very first paragraph," I went on, "he calls himself a fool without any gumption Is that concert?"

"Oh, well——"

"Then further on he calls himself a sponger, a renegade, a weakling, a coward, relates how other people call him a chump, a dirty tramp, a damfool, admits that he is superstitious and near the bone, that he is not above begging at doors, that he has been in jail, and time and again he tells stories against himself, shows himself up, pulls his own leg Is that the sort of thing boastful men do?"

"Oh, well——"

"And toward the end," said I, "Tramp-Royal, calling his ego a contemptible ego, consigns it to the limbo of exploded nothings Is that the act of a swelled-headed egoist?"

"Oh, well——"

"So you see, you concerted ass——"

The bloke fairly jumped Indignation and injured self-love made his face a study

"There you are!" I cried, triumphantly "You give yourself away You only got out of the book

what your mind put into it conceit, boastfulness, swelled-headed egoism Thinking so much of yourself, fancying yourself such a lot, you couldn't understand meekness, humility, and honest candour when you met them For if you yourself had called Tramp-Royal a conceited ass he would have smiled at you "

"How do you know what Tramp-Royal would have done ? "

"Because *I* am Tramp-Royal "

"Oh—now it's you who are the conceited ass ! "

I smiled at him

"Joking aside," I continued, "I'm afraid that you've mis-read this bloke Tramp-Royal For you take him seriously And to take Tramp-Royal seriously is to miss half, three-quarters, nine-tenths of his humour——"

"His *what* ? "

"His humour The humour of grossly over-exaggerated statement Where you think he is patting himself on the back he is really pulling his own leg—and yours, too Why, his very name, Tramp-Royal, is a leg-pull There is no more absurd combination in the English language Ha ! ha ! ha ! "

"Who the blazes are you laughing at ? "

"At Tramp-Royal ! Ha ! ha ! ha ! He tickles me ! And this book you take so seriously, and that has so got your proud goat—it was written with a ha'penny pencil on Woolworth notepaper in a doss-house ! Ha ! ha ! ha ! Laugh that off ! "

By this time we were passing where a broken wall gave access to a dark place of trees So, as my company had now become poisonous to my friend the enemy, I bade him so-long and clambered through into the wood, where I spent the night

Next day broke perfect Awake early, I breakfasted leisurely, squatting by the fire and gazing

out to the wild beach and the blazing bay beyond. Then, obliterating all traces of my sojourn, I hit the road and shortly came into Drummore.

In the golden morning light this little village by the sea was very pleasing to the eye. Two old hulks in the harbour supplied the necessary picturesque touch. And as I climbed out through its homely street to the breezy, sun-bright downs above it, a strange feeling that I had walked that way before in some far-off age took hold of me.

The five-mile walk to the lighthouse on the Mull, which is Scotland's Land's End, was without event. The wind crooned and sighed, the sun blazed, larks hung warbling in the blue, and the sea-line, without sail or smoke-smudge, rose around on three sides. I might have been walking out to the lighthouse on Lizard Point in Cornwall, so similar was the scene.

The Mull of Galloway is a bold cliffy bulk of rock joined to the main promontory of the Rhinns by a high, narrow isthmus. No trees grow there, only grass and heather. On clear days wide views are obtainable from its highest point. You can see the Isle of Man, the Irish coast, the Cumberland fells, the hills of Galloway and Carrick. But of these, only the landward heights were now visible, the state of the atmosphere, notwithstanding the cloudlessness of the sky, being such that Ireland and Man lay beyond sight.

Flinging myself down on the cropped turf of the clifftop near the lighthouse, I rested for a spell, searching the horizon and watching the wheeling gulls. And lying there I recollected that it was on this natural stronghold, on this sea-girt rock, whither the forces of death and destiny had hounded them, that the last survivors of the Pictish race had finally perished, and with them, legend tells, the secret of heather ale.



Heather ale ? you ask    Sure ! say I

“ From the bonny bells of heather  
 They brewed a drink long-syne,  
 Was sweeter far than honey,  
 Was stronger far than wine  
 They brewed it and they drank it,  
 And lay in a blessed swound  
 For days and days together  
 In their dwellings underground ”

And the legend ? Well, it appears that the last two Picts, father and son, were taken prisoner by the enemy here on the Mull, and were offered their lives if they would divulge the secret of brewing ale from heather. Whereupon ensued the following conversation, which I have been at pains to translate from the original into a language more appropriate.

“ Now, see here, youse Pictish guys, what about it ? Are you gonna talk turkey ? Will you slip us the low-down on this heather hooch racket, or get bumped off ? ”

“ Aw, save your breath. I ain't telling nuthin' to no hijacker ”

“ Oh, yeah ? ”

“ Oh, yeah ! ”

“ Aw, pop, why dontcha spill it ? Them bozos sure give me a pain in the pants—the big stiffs ! The racket's all washed up, anyways    Get wise to yourself, pop    Give 'em the dope ”

“ You keep outa this, son. You don't know what it's all about    Let me do the chin-wagging. . . Say, can I talk with you boys alone ? Sure, take the kid where he can't collect an earful    That's it    Now I'm ready to talk turkey ”

“ You mean you gonna come clean ? ”

“ You said it    Only, you gotta rub out junior first    Yep    Take him for a ride and bump him off ”

" You sure he ain't in on the racket ? "

" The kid ? Naw ! He only drives the truck He don't know a thing "

" Then why're you putting him on the spot ? "

" Aw, he's yella, I guess The little rat ! He ain't fit to live, that's how "

" Okay All right, gang, give the kid the works Frisk him No rod ? Oke Now up with him—ready ? One—two—three—over ! Guess we're sure handing the fishes a swell break, eh ? "

" We'll say, chief "

" And now, Pict, spill the medicine Give us the low-down on this heather hooch, and make it snappy "

" *Suckers !* "

" What's that ! "

" Why, you saps, the kid was wise, wise to the whole racket—see ? But you coulda sweated it outa him I knowed that That's why I dealt you that phoney hand He woulda squealed, that's all And now bump me off, too, you dumb-bells, for you ain't gonna get nuthin' outa me nohow, never ! "

" You double-crossing skunk ! Take that ! and that ! and that ! " <sup>1</sup>

Rising from the clifftop, I sought the mainland of the Rhinns, and, facing north, began following the little sheepwalk that runs along the edge of the cliffs in the Drummole direction But so ideal was the day that to have walked through it, and maybe away from it, would have been a kind of sacrilege Nor did I want to walk I wanted to lie in the sun on the sward above the sea and listen to the larks I wanted to lie, and lie, and keep on lying So when a little combe opened below me, sloping to the beach, I deserted the sheepwalk and plunged down

<sup>1</sup> Said with lead

through tangled gorse, bracken, and bramble to where a burn gurgled among hot rocks at the bottom

The place was secret. Behind me, on three sides, rose the green walls of the combe, framing a wedge of blue sky wherein blazed the sun. In front, with a strip of solitary shore intervening, the sea-line cut across. And when I had lighted a fire of driftwood under a gnarled thorn tree by the burnside, the picture of romantic seclusion was complete.

There, in the fierce noon, I dined, then lay down and kept on lying, half-awake and half-dreaming, until the sun left the zenith; at which I stowed my gear, shouldered my peter, and, climbing up through the gorse, bracken, and bramble, resumed the path along the cliff.

In time this led me out on to the main road, and so into Drummore.

As my peter needed replenishing I called in at a grocer's and filled up, the while being chatted to by the grocer's assistant.

Clever lads, these grocers' assistants. No flies on them, always civil, obliging, smiling, and full of talk. In this last instance they remind one of conjurers and illusionists: their artless patter has artful method behind it. It is so much dust in your eyes, and a man needs to be a woman to be proof against it. For their talk deafens you so that you don't see that they're giving you a large packet of cigarettes, for example, instead of a small packet, or a pound of sweets instead of a quarter, or the dearest butter instead of margarine. No, the wool is pulled off your eyes only when they've tied up your parcel in ham-twine and handed you the bill, whereupon, being a mere man, you pay, and as a sort of booby prize they present you with a wee cake of chocolate. Ah, yes, clever lads, these grocers' assistants: clever, clever lads.

Leaving Drummore I held on up the coast road through glorious weather, alongside the shore Where a wooded height overhangs the beach I rested for a bit, recalling to mind Stalky and Co., in their 'Pleasant Isle of Aves' And the view I got was inspiring Across the broad, shimmering, colourful expanse of the great Bay of Luce, far beyond and above the plains of the Machars, all the mountains of Kirkcudbrightshire, from the hog-back of Criffell on the Solway shore to the peak of Merrick on the Carrick border, were clearly discernible It was marvellous In one glance, with the merest turn of the head, the eye took in the whole of Galloway

All afternoon, thereafter, I pursued my nose northward up the pleasant coast, past Ardwell, Chapel Rossan, and Sandhead, until evening discovered me treading the dead lands at the head of the great bay—treading Torrs Warren

Rarely have I fared along a byway so sequestered as the one here, or traversed solitudes so lone as those which now encompassed me On my right, across a lifeless level of sombre heath and bog, and with the wind of sunset sighing and whispering among the bents, heaved the tufted hummocks of the dunes that extend for miles along the desolate Sands of Luce And on my left, hushed and brooding, bounded only by the horizon's rim and with only far plantings of pine breaking its plain, stretched a dark desert of wold And while, on its uttermost edge, day was slipping the vast red coin of the sun into the slot of night, in the clear cold blue of the eastern sky the moon was rapidly brightening

As I sped onward through the jewel-clear dusk, anxiously scanning the wilderness for a place, I suddenly spied a dark object standing back from the road in a clearing in the heather And in the middle

of this dark object a light twinkled, and I heard voices. So, leaving the road to investigate, I found it to be a covered van with a little window in the cover through which streamed the light from a paraffin lamp. And on peering through I saw within three old women sitting with their grey heads together, talking.

"*Koshti sarla !*" I called through the window-hole, whereat the three looked round.

"Go away !" cried one of them, angrily.

"*What a grasn shan tu !*" I replied. "*I only want my vast dukkered. Will you dukker drey my vast, pen ?*"

She looked blankly at the others.

"What's the laddie haverin' aboot, d'ye ken ? I canna mak' him oot."

Both shook their heads.

"*Don't you rokkia Romanes ?*" I asked.

"Wha' are ye, and what is't ye're wantin' ?" was the answer.

"*Me ? I'm a mango-mengro on the Tobbar wanting his vast dukkered. You're tatchey Romanes, aren't you ?*"

"Go away !"

"*Paracrow tute !*" I replied, and was shoving off when a thought struck me, and, going round to the front of the van, I lifted the door flap and said.

"Excuse me, but you don't happen to have seen gypsies camping near here, do you ?"

"Gypsies ?" echoed the spokeswoman, rising, "Why, we're gypsies."

"You ! Real gypsies ?"

"Oh, aye, real gypsies. We—we're real gypsies."

"Yes, indeed," chimed in the others, "we—we're real gypsies."

"You don't say !" I said. "You'll be able, then, to spae my fortune ?"

“ That we will      Come your ways in      Now,  
 here's the cards      Pick oot three      And ither three  
 And three again      That'll dae ”

Taking the nine cards I had chosen from a greasy deck, the spaewife laid them face downward on her lap, in a certain order. Then lifting them one by one, in reverse order, she scrutinised them closely, and read them off

“ Ye'll meet wi' a big black man, soon, and then wi' a big blue man, wi' a lot of big blue men. And you'll go roun' and roun' and up and down, inside a place. And ye'll gi'e awa' what ye don't want to gi'e awa', and get back what was never ta'en frae ye. And a' this, in some way that I canna unnerstaun', has got to dae wi' royalty (four keengs) and a fire (mair reds nor blacks). And that's a' ”

At that another of the three rose and possessed herself of my left hand, only to let it drop almost instantly, exclaiming “ Guidsakes—the *trushul* ! ”

Now, *the trushul* is Shelta for the sign of the cross

“ Whaur ? Whaur ? ” cried the other two, jumping up and possessing themselves in turn of my left hand, which they studied excitedly before letting drop. Then they stood peering into my face

“ What do they call ye, laddie ? ” they demanded, eagerly “ What's your name ? Tell us ! ”

“ Lumsden,” I told them “ Archie Lumsden. Archiebald MacGillivray Lumsden ”

“ Na ! na ! ” they cried “ That canna be. Ye're leen', laddie. Your name's no' Lumsden. It's Marshall. You're ane o' the Marshalls ! ”

“ Oh, no,” I replied, getting up and backing out of the van and down the steps and away “ It's no' Marshall. Oh, no. It's Lumsden. Archie Lumsden. Archiebald MacGillivray Lumsden ! ”

It was now bright moonlight, and a keen wind cut across the wold. Onward I hurried, questing right and left for a place, until at last a black mass of pinewood blotting out the stars brought my search to an end.

Though appearing as black as the Pit from outside, yet the wood, once I had penetrated its outer fringes and my eyes had grown used to the gloom, proved surprisingly light. The night sky, too, bits of which peeped down through the treetops and looked in through the long perpendicular slits between the pines, was not dark any more, but actually light, in contrast, that is, with the densely black timber. But no sooner did I start a fire than both night and wood rushed in on me, and I found myself, as it seemed, seated, like Truth, at the bottom of a well whose sides were constructed of solid blocks of utter and impenetrable dark.

And there, following a warm supper and a cool smoke, I turned in and slept undisturbed until daybreak.

## LAP THE SIXTH

### ROUND THE MACHARS

Sabbath morn—Asinine hee-hawing—Warrior's woe—A skypper in a thousand—Along a rocky shore—A son of Roma—The gypsy myth—At Monreith Bay—A man with a gun—A sane world, eh?—The Isle of Whithorn—Enter the Domnie

MORNING broke beautifully calm and fair Into the green gloom of the planting the long shafts of sunrise swept like golden-hued spotlights seeking an actor to shine on Nor did they seek in vain For there was I, already dressed and made-up for my part, sitting breakfasting beside a crackling woodfire, and wondering whether it was just fancy that made Sabbath morns seem to break more beautifully calm and fair than weekday mornings

I nearly forgot, though, when filling the billy at the place where I had filled it the night before, I discovered that what by moonlight had appeared to be a burn was in reality a drain, and that the water in it, if water it could be called, was as stagnant as water can be, and I then recalled that the supper coffee had smelt more fragrant and tasted more fruity than usual However, as there was no running water within miles, the country being so flat, I didn't hesitate in using the noisome stuff again, for, I argued, since the first dose had produced no ill effect, what harm could a second one do?

This argument, as it proved, was sound, which fact strengthens me in my pet heresy that there's a lot of insane bunk talked and written about in-



sanitation, and that if folk were less afraid of contamination fewer would be contaminated. Because the armour for which the bugs of infection have greatest respect is the armour of utter and absolute contempt for the bugs of infection.

In short, though physicians slay their thousands, fears slay their ten thousands.

Well (for possibly the foregoing has been so much asinine hee-hawing to you), after dilly-dallying in the pinewood till the sun was fairly up the sky, I took the road in scorching weather and sweated through dust and petrol guff round the head of Luce Bay, coming to the village of Glenluce about noon.

I came to the village, but didn't enter it. Instead, I turned off sharp down Luce Waterside, seeking and soon finding a pleasant place, where I lighted a fire and had dinner. And above me, on a green hill, a war memorial stood against the blue sky.

While I am sitting on the bank of the stream paddling my feet, there comes walking on the grass a man with a peculiar light in his eye. And by the sardonic droop of his lip and the shabbiness of his attire I know him for an ex-Service man.

"I was in the wars," he explains. "In the Boer War and the Great War. My best years were taken from me by my king and country. I've got medals with bars. I've got wounds and gas and malaria and one lung. And I've got no job. I couldn't work if I had. On two occasions I've had a wife and kiddie. At present I've got two kiddies and a third wife coming. And I've got a pension, but so have field-m Marshals. When I die I'll fill a pauper's grave. If I take my life before then I'll be said to have been temporarily insane. If I had been killed in the wars, where I took the lives of twenty men, three women, and a consumptive cripple, they'd have engraved my name on a stone like that,"

pointing to the war memorial on the hill behind, "to the glory of God, and my name would have lived for evermore It's a fine day Good afternoon"

Southwards from that place, into the sun, I continued down the east shore of the great Bay of Luce The road was ideal, little frequented, offering uninterrupted vistas of sea and sky Wide shining levels of lonely sands stretched away as far as eye could range Above them gulls wheeled and dipped tirelessly, calling, calling, calling Miles out in the middle of the sands a tiny dot on a bicycle rode by the edge of the waves And on the blue sea-line, remote and mysterious as always, now dim, now clear, now hidden by haze, loomed the peaks of Man

Barely had I journeyed above a league when the road quitted the coast, striking inland at right-angles straight to the west, which was a great disappointment Still, if the road didn't like the company of the coast I did Shaking its dust from my feet, therefore, I climbed high up on to the top of the turfy downs and held on southward Then my feet found a sheepwalk, which I pursued under the clear sky, above the shining sea, through fields and farmlands steeped in Sabbath quiet Then the sheepwalk unexpectedly debouched on to a roaring highway, which, in turn, debouched on to a bay, Auchenmalg Bay, and there was I in the rosy evening walking again by beaches searching for a place

Onward I trudged and arrived at length at the far side of the bay, where low rocky cliff-faces rise above the road to look across it on to a rock-strewn strand And in the cliff-faces were nooks and holes And one of these was a proper cave that some tramp had converted into a skypper, laying down heather and bracken for a bed and leaving

stacked driftwood for a fire, and close by, where the rock dripped, was a little pool

A skipper in a thousand!

Hurriedly, ere the sun sank and darkened the cave, I made up the bed ready to pop into, then, crawling out, I lighted a fire at the cave-mouth and had supper, thereafter sitting smoking a pipe, at peace with the world

By then the sun had set. The sky above where it had gone down, which was behind the long low purple line of the Rhinns promontory, now glowed a deep, translucent amber that paled and merged outward and upward through warm orange and cooler saffron shades, and through every delicate gradation of green, until, in the zenith, it assumed the profound, pulsating, luminous blue-blackness of definite night wherein burned the stars. And the glassy expanse of the great Bay of Luce, as it heaved and swelled, mirrored hue for hue and tint for tint in minutest detail. Then, the pageant faded, Orion rose to stand poised over Drummore, the jewels in his sword-hilt outrivalling the Mull Light. And as the moon peeped over the cliff behind me, and as I crawled into the cave, I thought with the poet—

“ Though the many lights dwindle to one light,  
 There is help if the heaven has one,  
 Though the skies be discrowned of the sunlight  
 And the earth dispossessed of the sun,  
 They have moonlight and sleep for repayment,  
 When, refreshed as a bride and set free,  
 With stars and sea-winds in her raiment,  
 Night sinks in the sea ”

Stepping from the chilly cave into the outer air next morning was like stepping from a cold bath into a warm one. For the morning was perfect. White clouds, blue seas, and sunny skies prevailed,

though after breakfast, when I took the road, the skies became overcast and the seas leaden

Down along the rocky shore I went, halting at times to watch the gannet plunge, and to wonder at the weird cormorant standing motionless as the stone it stood on. These interminable stretches of wild beach cast a spell over me. Their desolation gripped and fascinated me. They were like the shores of a desert isle awaiting a castaway. Southward in their congenial company I strode, and noted how every bush and shrub had been so sheared and trained by the wind, than whom none can surpass in the art of topiary, that they all leant inland at the same slant with hardly a twig or leaf breaking the symmetry of their streamlining.

But, you interrupt impatiently, didn't anything interesting, or amusing, or thrilling happen all this while, Tramp-Royal? Why no, I reply, sort of astonished, for miles and miles nothing happened, nor did I meet a living soul, I just walked. And if you don't like it you can lump it. And as this is a veracious history, containing the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, I cannot, even to please you, make things happen. Because on the Toby, as on the road of life, between each inch of interest lie barren leagues of devastating uninterest. So there! And don't let me catch you interrupting again.

Well, all forenoon through the grey weather I continued along the eastern shore of Luce Bay. Then, just outside the little village of Port William, I came upon a band of gypsies encamped on the foreshore.

It was a bien band, too. For besides three caravans, two tilt-carts, and a spring float, I noted a motor-cycle with side-car, a couple of bicycles, half a dozen ponies, and a herd of goats.

Gypsies, authorities assure us, have no word for *possession* in their vocabulary !

As I came up I saw a big dirty bloke say something to a little dirty bloke, who lounged over to the roadside and accosted me.

"Ye havenae got the right time aboot ye, have ye, sir ?" he whined, wiping his nose on his cuff this gentleman of the open, this natural nobleman, this king-descended son of Roma

"Yes," said I, squinting up at the sky, where a brightness indicated the sun's position, "it's dinner-time"

"Thank ye Ye—ye havenae got a cigarette as well, have ye, sir ?"

"Certainly I have. I've got a big case stuffed full of big, fat, hand-rolled cigarettes They're fine to strike up when one's resting, soothing, too. Good-day Hope your father's keeping well"

George Borrow had an awful nerve when he glorified the British gypsy For he, the British gypsy, is the dullest, dingiest, least interesting, most colourless, unattractive, unromantic, unpicturesque, and stupidest, empty-headeddest figure that ever infested the highways and byways of Britain In his case distance lends enchantment to the view Nothing is more romantic than to chance upon a gypsy encampment in a green dingle at twilight—to chance upon and pass Because to fraternise with gypsies is to have one's idols shattered, one's images broken, and one's fag-case emptied Whining for cigarettes and pennies is about all these degenerate Romanies are good for In vain will you seek for a picturesque touch of colour, for to wear bright scarves, etc, would mean too much devotion to the washtub Their clothes rarely fit, and are nearly always odd Clean faces are seldom seen, handsome ones never The alleged beauty of the women is a terrible libel

on beauty, to call them plain would be grossest flattery

It is the sheerest twaddle, also, to say that gypsies abhor houses and sleep always in the open. On the contrary, it was their deep-rooted abhorrence of sleeping in the open, together with their fanatical attachment to houses, which produced that typical gypsy contraption—the caravan, or house on wheels, without which no gypsy would have the guts to travel. For, knowing no better, he has the old-fashioned horror of inhaling the night air, which is why his tan, or tent, is made airtight, as also his caravan, and that's why the average gypsy, contrary to the popular conception created and fostered by writers having more sentiment than sense, presents such a pitifully weedy, week-kneed, consumptive appearance.

And now that the gypsy myth is exploded for all time, we can proceed.

In Port William, which is a sleepy little no-account place, I lingered only to procure groceries, thereafter hastening alongside the wide shore southward, searching for a spot to light a fire.

Such a spot I finally hit upon a couple or so miles further along, in Monreith Bay, where are fine stretches of sand and summer bungalows, and after a good dinner, followed by a siesta in the sun, which had by then appeared, I swam along to another part of the shore, upon which a big ship, *Camlough*, lay on her side among the rocks where stormy seas had piled her. Then in the late afternoon, by way of Monreith village, I set out along the road leading to the Isle of Whithorn.

It struck inland, this road did, and switchbacked for long, straight, always-ascending miles over a partly cultivated moorland. As night wasn't far off, however, I didn't foot the flint any great distance ;

for a picturesque pinewood presently hove up beside the road, and in a trice I was over the wall and making my way through the trees. And there, at the back end of the wood, I downed peter for the night.

Camp being made, and having still daylight on my hands, I busied myself with a very necessary task I mean I soled and heeled my shoes But while doing so I cursed the blessings of civilisation which have taken the zest out of present-day life and made existence foolproof, and us gadget-manipulating, and manipulated, automatons For instead of it taking me hours of sweated labour to do the cobbling cutting, shaping, hammering, fitting, nailing, patching, etc , with the help of a despicable little gadget I completed the job in ten minutes Yes, I merely squeezed out the contents of a tube of liquid leather over soles and heels, spreading it and trimming the edges with a knife like buttering a piece of bread , after which I tossed the shoes aside and forgot about them In the morning, I knew, the stuff would be tough and hard-wearing as rhinoceros hide

While I am lying by the campfire watching through the pines the sun setting on the distant rim of the moor, I hear the cracking of trodden twigs and see emerge from the bushes a dog followed by a man carrying a double-barrelled shotgun at full cock

Catching sight of me the animal leaps aside with a yelp of fright, whereupon his master instantly trains his weapon on me, finger on trigger

" Hello," says I, reluctantly rising to my feet.

" Hello," says the man, reluctantly lowering the gun

" Does this wood belong to you ? " I ask, smiling , for the idea of a wood belonging to anybody is absurd

"Yes, it belongs to me," answers the man, solemnly, and one could see he actually believed it belonged to him

"Then can I camp here?"

"Oh, yes I can see you don't need to be told how to take care of a fire, so that's all right Seen any wood-pigeons?"

No, I hadn't seen any wood-pigeons Was that what he was out to shoot? Really! Oh, yes, I had heard they tasted fine when baked in a pie Well, good-night

As the man who owned the wood, again carrying his double-barrelled shotgun at full cock, prowled away through the bushes in relentless quest of the gentle cooing bird, emblematic of love and peace the world over, which he meant to pierce with painful shot and bake in a pie, I began to speculate. I speculated on what would have happened if a representative of Law and order, a policeman, had appeared and beheld, first, that bloody-minded and habitual killer hounding down gentleness and innocence with slaughterous and cannibalistic intent, and second, humble me, my thoughts full of poetry, beauty, and romance, loving all life, making picturesque the wood with my campfire, sitting admiring God's sunset——

Why, says you, breaking in it is easy to see what would have happened, Tramp-Royal, because, if a policeman had appeared, he would have—— Right! says I spoken like an understanding citizen! In the interests of Law and order and peace and justice and public safety and private security, the policeman would have haled ME off to the cells as a menace to civilised society, and he would have made an appointment with the other man to go pigeon-shooting as soon as he was off duty



A sane world, boys, eh? Och, sure!

Next morning, feeling like Spring-heeled Jack in my scientifically cobbled shoes, I rapidly demolished the long, straight, uninteresting length of roadway separating me from the Isle of Whithorn. And as I strode into that place of one-time pilgrimage, I chuckled to think of how the old order had changed, for while in the long ago sovereign royalty was wont to arrive there barefoot, here was tramp royalty arriving superlatively shod!

The Isle of Whithorn isn't an island. It is a quaint, sleepy, strangely attractive little village clustered about a peninsula with a very narrow isthmus, whereon at high tide the bases of the houses are submerged, imparting to the place a Venetian aspect. And here the road peters out, and one finds oneself on a green land's end, girt by the sea, upon which stand the four bare walls of the ruined chapel of St Ninian, goal of many a pilgrimage long-syne.

On the southern extremity of this land's end is erected a solid stone tower for use as a landmark. So here on a wooden bench I sat resting for a while with the wide sea-view for company, wondering if King Jamie the Fourth's feet blistered in the same places as a tramp's, and speculating on what the royal pilgrim said on the occasions when he stubbed his toe. Then I rose, and, recrossing the isthmus, turned north up the coast road leading to Wigtown.

About a mile or so from the Isle of Whithorn this road runs down past the shore of the bay of Portyerrack, so here, it being midday, I unslung my pack and cooked a meal over a fire of driftwood.

It was a glorious day, with stately masses of dazzling cumulus serenely sailing across the blue, sunny sky. The view, too, was good to look upon. From my feet the waters of Wigtown Bay stretched

far over to the Kirkcudbrightshire coast, where in the bright sunshine the bonnie woods of Ellangowan grew green against the hill, and, further inland, the dusky bulk of Cairnsmore of Fleet brooded majestically under mist

There being but a scanty supply of driftwood, I utilised a lot of old boots that the tide had washed up (nothing burns better than old boots), and am sitting enjoying the blaze when, happening to look up, I see approaching a big lanky man clothed in black, reading aloud from a book, a minister, I suppose, reading his Bible

But as my eyes take in the black clerical coat and trousers, the low-crowned round hat, and the vest with the square opening in the collar where a white choker ought to, but doesn't, show, I all of a sudden remember having seen such a ministerial individual before

It is the Dominie bloke of the Newton Stewart howff!

## LAP THE SEVENTH

### THE DOMINIE.

Recognition—The Dominic's Bible—Burning boots—The Dominic's weakness—Merry widowers—Into Wigtown—A subtle change—*Hijo de demonio!*—A magnet to trouble—Creetown—*Guy Mannering* country—Scott—Meg Merrilies—"Pro-di-gious!"—Sadder and wiser—The Best People—The Dominic's loquacity—Law and Justice—Fine and punishment—*Buenas noches*

THE Dominic approaches leisurely, his eyes fixed on the book he is reading aloud from and his free hand gesticulating in a grand manner

"*Sábeta, amigo,*" he enunciates sonorously, "*que para curar todo género de males no es menester más que sangrar y hacer beber agua caliente Este es el gran secreto para curar todas las enfermedades del mundo Sí este maravilloso secreto que—*"

"Hello!" I call, whereat he lowers the book to reveal the same gaunt, unshaven, lantern-jawed countenance that had attracted me of yore He recognises me

"Ah, hello!" says he, annihilating the distance between us in two enormous strides "So we meet again, *hijo mo?*"

"Sure I say, won't you sit down and have some grub? It's plain, but there's lots of it"

"Delighted As for the plainness, why, the best sauce in the world is hunger, and as that is never wanting to the poor they always eat with relish—as Tereza Panza remarked on one occasion"

When he is seated, with his boots off, I enquire what book it is he is reading

"One of my testaments," he replies, his mouth full of fried banana, "of which I have two At least, I call them my testaments, for together they form my Bible And in them is more of true knowledge and inspired wisdom than— *Hijo de demonio!* The food of the gods was fried banana!"

"Yes, but about your testaments?"

"This one which I am reading contains the adventures of that immortal *pícaro*, Gil Blas de Santillane, translated into the Spanish from the French, by Padre Isla And my other testament, which I here produce, is the second, and best, part of the history of the valorous Knight of the Sorrowful Figure, Don Quixote de La Mancha, and his squire, Sancho Panza It's strange, you know, but although *Gil Blas* was originally written in French by a Frenchman who never saw Spain, it is, in parts, more Spanish than Cervantes' masterpiece"

He then asks if I am acquainted with foreign languages

"No," I confess "And even if I were I wouldn't air it Because while a respectable man is more thought of the more languages he knows, a disreputable pauper with a knowledge of tongues is looked on as a low upstart with the deuce of a cheek Knowledge in the rich being a laudable virtue, but in the poor a damnable vice"

"It may be so, *hijo mio* For the grub, *gracias*. Though plain, it was plentiful, and I have my belly full And for my part, as Sancho remarked on one occasion after leaving his island of Baratania, so that my belly be full, all is one to me, whether it be with carrots or partridges . Take care those aren't your own boots you are burning"

All this while I had been steadily burning the old boots I had gathered on the shore, and both of us

had taken our own boots off, hence the reason for the Dommie's cautioning

"For I remember being in a skypper once," he adds, "in company with another And we were burning old boots the same as you are doing, and my companion burnt his own by mistake *Hijo de demonio!* Did I laugh? Ha! ha! ha! It seems a pity to burn this pair They're still good and strong However, on they go"

He throws a pair on to the fire

"Aren't you going to keep them?" I ask "A pair of boots are handy things"

"But I've got a pair of my own, *hijo mio*"

"I know that," says I, "but if you don't take them off the fire this minute—you won't have!"

They were his own boots he had put on the fire

After a great deal of talking on the Dommie's part, and a greater deal of listening on mine, we prepared to take the road For as my companion was travelling in the same direction, towards Wigtown, we had agreed to go together But as he rose to his feet a banana—one of my bananas—tumbled to the ground

"*Hijo de demonio!*" he exclaimed, not at all abashed, "I must have done it again"

"Done what again, chum?" I asked, going into his pockets and retrieving other two of my bananas

"Succumbed to my weakness."

"And what's that?"

"Kleptomania Periodically, *hijo mio*, I am its dupe and tool Now you know all"

"Ah Then this clerical rig-out is the loot of one of your succumbing lapses?"

"It is, I'm afraid"

"How did it happen?"

"Oh, a minister went forth to bathe——"

Of the road, four leagues long, between Portyer-rock and Wigtown, I won't say much. It is just a country road, in parts running between fine woodlands, and though it follows closely the line of the western shore of Wigtown Bay nearly all the way, it touches it only once, at the little port of Garliestown.

Here the Dominie and I came upon a toad with a jewel in its head, I mean a tramp sitting on top of a roadside dump holding in his hand a scrap of paper and gazing vacantly into space out of a pair of faded blue eyes, in each of which a big round pearly tear hung trembling on the brink.

"Boys," says he to us, "I found this bit of paper a long while ago, and I've carried it about with me ever since. I think it's the truest and beautifullest thing that ever was wrote. Listen.

'I have heard the song of the blossoms and the old chant of the sea,

And seen strange lands from under the arched white sails of ships,

But the loveliest things of beauty God ever has showed to me

Are her voice, and her hair, and eyes, and the dear red curve of her lips.'

"Boys," he explained, and the two big round pearly tears dropped into the dust, "I had a wife—and she died."

"*Pobrecito loco*," my kleptomaniacal pal said, as we passed on. "To hear him talk one would suppose her to have been a Dulcinea del Toboso, whereas, were the truth known, she was probably a mere Aldonza Lorenzo. But love enchants. As the valorous Manchegan once remarked——"

Just at that, though, a couple of mirthful tramps came reeling past, helplessly clinging to each other,

and laughing at some joke so that tears of joy and happiness streamed down their faces Whereat the Dominie, turning to me, slyly whispered "*Hijo de demonio!* Had both of them a wife? and has she died?"

Along we went up the long, straight, soaring road The views we got of the Creetown shore on the far side of the ever-narrowing bay, and of the mist-shrouded Minnigaffs, were impressive The tide being out, where blue water should have been were great expanses of sandflats, down the middle of which wandered the thin trickle of the river Cree And day was giving place to evening

We rested often, too often, and on my protesting, the Dominie would come back at me with a quotation out of *Don Quixote*

"*Hijo mio*," he would say, lowering his long black-coated body to the ground, "trudging on foot is no such pleasant thing as to encourage or incite me to travel great days' journeys—as Sancho remarked after leaving Barcelona, where, you remember, his master was overthrown by the Knight of the White Moon, alias the bachelor, Sampson Carrasco"

"Oh, get up!" I would urge "We'll never reach Wigtown to-night at this rate Get up and come on!"

"Not though barefooted friars should entreat me, *amigo mio*—as He of the Rueful Countenance remarked, not once, but on a plurality of occasions"

"All right, but don't blame me if we have to kip out"

"And what of that? With sturdy Sancho I can say that I have often lain on the hard ground, in the open air, subject to what people call the inclemencies of heaven, living upon bits of bread and scraps of cheese, and drinking water, sometimes from the brook, sometimes from the——"

"Will you get up and come on!"

“ Oh, very well, *hijo mio* To you I am paste and sugar, to all others flint—as the quixotic Don once had occasion to remark in connection with the peerless Dulcinea to you I am honey, to the rest aloes *Vamos !* ”

At last, in the darkening evening, the Dominie and I came into Wigtown

It being the county town of Wigtownshire, I expected to find—— Well, anyway, I didn't find what I expected to find For the truth is, Wigtown is a sell, a proper sell And it's a dump, there's no other name for it, a mossy, grass-grown dump Indeed, so much grass grows in the middle of the main street that the townspeople have enclosed it and made of it a tennis court

And when you walk along the narrow pavements, dazed with the horror of it all, and with disillusionment blazoned in capitals upon you, the natives whom you meet let fall their shame-filled eyes, or else shoot sidelong glances at you that plead louder than words “ Ah, we entreat you, stranger, we beseech you, pour not out your scorn upon us, loose not the vials of your invective upon we For that the town is a dump, we know That you have been sold, we see That you are out for someone's blood, we are aware But extend towards us your pity and not your punches Bruit the dread tidings not abroad, and let mum be the word, so that as many chumps shall follow after you as came before, and the dire dumpfulness of this our town shall be preserved in perpetuity Have you visited the Martyrs' Monument ? ”

As we entered Wigtown and made our way towards the Low Vennel, in the purlieus of which the Dominie had said there was a *posada*, which was his name for a lodging-house, my companion's bearing underwent a subtle change He no longer stalked like a *hidalgo*,



nor did he gesticulate or talk big. Instead, he shortened his stride to mine, pitched his voice in a demurer key, and kept his face averted and his eyes fixed on the ground, thus at one and the same time adopting the demeanour most in keeping with his ecclesiastical togs, and the posture most effective in concealing his lack of a choker. In the half-light you would have taken him for a country minister who, being absorbed in spiritual groping to the exclusion of all else, had forgotten to wash his face and brush his boots.

"How much will our bed cost?" I asked, on 'nearing the *posada*.

"One-and-six, *hijo mio*," he replied.

"One-and-six! But that's robbery. Ninepence is about the usual price."

"Ninepence for one bed, yes, but for two beds one-and-six."

"For two——? Oh, I see what you're driving at. You mean that I'm to pay for yours as well as for my own?"

"Why not? Is the labourer unworthy of his hire? Have I not entertained you right royally, *hijo mio*, over the best part of a day's journey? Have I not shortened the miles for you and made less weary the way by recounting, in a manner inimitable and peculiarly my own, with gestures appropriate and asides explanatory, the extravaganzas of Don Quixote and the simplicities of Sancho Panza? Have I not introduced you to the *pícaro*, Gil Blas de Santillane? or to Doctor Sangredo of Valladolid? or to the Archbishop of Granada? or to the hundred and one other immortals in my Bible? Have I not sat you down to a feast of wisdom and a banquet of learning? *Hijo de demonio*! Am I a free-lance that you should come the editor with me? Would you call the tune and not pay the piper?"

"Oh, all right, all right!" I replied "Keep your shirt on You get your bed Only, I'd rather keep you for a week than for a fortnight Is this the *posada*?"

It was the *posada*, and there you'll have to imagine my companion and me putting up for the night While he talked I paid and did the cooking . And next morning at a reasonable hour we committed Wigtown to the devil and caught the first road to Newton Stewart

The morning was both sunny and windy Uphill and down the road switchbacked merrily Grand views of the Creetown shore were our lot In the north the Minnigaffs, still burdened with mist, loomed terrific About noon, having taken our time over the eight-mile stretch of road separating the two towns, the Domnie and I arrived at Newton Stewart

On the outskirts my companion halted, telling me to go on through the town alone, and he would join me in about an hour's time on the other side of Cree Bridge He himself intended using a roundabout way

"But how is this?" I demanded "Are you afraid of the cops that you daren't use the main street?"

"Not so, *hijo mio*," he said "It is because I am a magnet to trouble and a lodestone to misadventure that I avoid the vicinity of probable persecution For as the Mirror of Knight-errantry remarked once, when he had occasion to admonish Sancho wherever virtue is found in any eminent degree, it is always persecuted *Hasta la vista!*"

The Domnie need not have shied, though, at running the gauntlet of Newton Stewart For as I fared alone down its long main street I met scarcely anybody, and the shops were shut At this I won-

dered at first, because twelve o'clock had just struck, and on half-holidays shops do not usually shut until one o'clock. But, happening to overhear two old hawker-women talking, I discovered the why of this. Instead of it being only a half-holiday, it was a *hale*, or whole, holiday. And so wholly and completely was it a holiday that not even a tea-room was open. I was forced, in consequence, to resort to a commercial hotel for something to eat.

At the appointed time I arrived at the rendezvous. Of the Domnie there was not a sign. So after waiting a quarter of an hour I gave him up for lost, and began walking leisurely along towards Cree-town, which lies some six miles further south. But about halfway I was arrested by hearing a call behind me, a call of "*Alto! amigo Alto! por Dios!*" and the Domnie, out of breath and in a vicious temper, came striding up.

"What kept you?" I asked. At that moment, though, a heavy downpour of hail and sleet drove us under a milk-can platform by the roadside, and it was some time before he replied.

"Need you ask what kept me, *hijo mio?*" he said. "Did I not tell you that I was a magnet to trouble and a lodestone to misadventure? *Hijo de demonio!* A farmer loosed his dog on me, a crowd of schoolboys called rude names after me, and pelted me, and a policeman was on the point of addressing to me interrogatory remarks."

"Didn't you find things, then?" I asked, for I suspected he had been knocking at back doors, kleptomaniacally intentioned.

"No, I lost things, three things—my way, my breath, and my temper. But all good things go by three. April the twenty-third, Sixteen-sixteen, illustrated that. For on that date Miguel de Cervantes

Saavedra breathed his last, Shakespeare gave up the ghost, and the sun set "

I gave him a cold-meat sandwich which I had prepared for him while at the commercial hotel

"*Un millón de gracias*," said he, taking it in both hands and demolishing it nearly at one bite "Bread is relief for all kinds of grief—as Sancho remarked to his ass Dapple on a certain subterranean occasion "

"Why don't you quote from *Gil Blas* for a change?" I asked

"Because," said he, "Le Sage, like Bernard Shaw, though full of good things well said, is somehow unquotable Cervantes, on the other hand, is quotable in his every line There's the sun now, *hijo mio* "

Up we got and off we went down the streaming road In front the pleasant wooded countryside, fresh and fair from its recent shower, was now enjoying a sunbath, but behind us the Minnigaff heights presented a truly terrifying spectacle, swathed and shrouded as they were in mist and gloom It made one shudder to look back Thunder rumbled and reverberated, lightning flickered, and mass after mass of sable thundercloud kept piling on top of the already over-burdened mountains And over all, framing all, was a rainbow

By the time that the Dominie and I reached Creetown, though, the sun was shining in a cloudless sky

Creetown is a place where a stretch of the road has had houses, mostly cottages, built along either side, why, nobody knows Considered as a town it is a fine wee street But no sooner have you passed the houses than, as a sort of consolation, you are suddenly confronted with the wide, windy spaciousness of Wigtown Bay, down whose eastern

shore, hugging the waterside, the road proceeds to wind

This is the most lovely, most romantic, most picturesque road in the world—according to Gallovidians. Actually, it is passably pretty. And it runs through the *Guy Mannering* country. Guide-books allege that the traveller is reminded of Scott at every turn, and that were a reader of *Guy Mannering* to be set down there he would know instantly where he was. Which is twaddle. Personally, having *Guy Mannering* nearly off by heart, I was never so disappointed by anything in my life as by the Creetown-Gatehouse road. If, as alleged, it runs through the *Guy Mannering* country, then I have still to read *Guy Mannering*.

The Dominie, as we lounged along, admitted that he himself had still to read *Guy Mannering*, and the majority of the Waverley novels.

"Oh," said I, "are you one of those queer clucks who dislike Scott?"

"*Hijo mio*," he confessed, "I am. Aren't you?"

"No," said I. "I'm one of those queer clucks who don't dislike Scott."

"Then tell me, in your opinion, when was Scott at his best?"

"Scott was at his best when making his low born characters talk and his high-born characters keep silent."

"And those interminable prefaces, introductions, appendices, notes, and vocabularies of his—what of them, *amigo*?"

"Without them his novels would hardly be worth-reading. When re-reading one of his books I skim hurriedly through the part that doesn't matter—the story part—before settling down to enjoy the part that does matter—the preface, introduction, appendix, notes, and vocabulary."

By this time we were passing where the woodlands make of the road a tunnel And here on a bank by the wayside sat resting a dusky-faced, bright-eyed gypsy wife, wearing earrings and a shawl, and with a dirty red bandana binding her raven hair

And, naturally enough, both the Dominie and I looked at her as we passed, which nettled the lady

"Who the cursing blazes are ye lookin' at?" she demanded "Tak' your e'en aff o' me, and go your ways!"

"Go your ways!" said I to the Dominie when a bend in the road permitted of our talking with safety "By heaven, she might be Meg Merrilies herself!"

"And who, pray, is Meg Merrilies?"

"Meg Merrilies? Oh, I forgot, you've never read *Guy Mannering* Good lord! it's just struck me—then, you'll never have heard of the Dominie?"

"No," said the Dominie, "I have never heard of the Dominie"

Which, as Euclid would have put it, was absurd

"Well, well," I said, "you're a funny Scotsman never to have heard of Meg Merrilies, or——"

"But I am not a Scotsman, *hijo mio*"

"Not a Scotsman!"

"*Madre de Dios*, no! I am an Englishman by accident, a Spaniard by design, and a kleptomaniac by heredity"

Some little distance ahead I noticed a motor-car drawn up by the roadside In it were a man and woman the man consulting a guide-book, and the woman pointing out an old ruined tower that rose above the trees; obviously tourists touring *Guy Mannering* land And suddenly I had a brain wave

Said I to my pal, pulling him into the side of the road, "Are you game for an adventure?"

"An adventure?" he echoed, "why, yes, pro-

viding the outcome be not bad For let me remind you, *hijo mio*, as a certain nosey squire had occasion to remind Sancho Panza that they who seek adventures do not always meet with good ones "

" Listen ! " I said " There'll be fried banana for supper to-night, if you do as I say See yon tourists yonder ? Well, go up to them and ask if they've seen wee Harry That's all you have to do And no matter what they answer, just reply ' Pro-di-gious ! ' Then hurry round the bend out of sight and wait for me Understand ? "

" Perfectly, *amigo* Incentivated by fried banana I am to approach yonder couple and enquire, without periphrastic or circumlocutory preamble, if they have seen wee Harry Then, following a period of pause, I am to ejaculate ' Pro-di-gious ! ' and retire promptly "

" That's it," I said " And while you're talking, do you think you could make your finger joints crack by pulling them ? "

The Dominie's hands, by the way, were such that a sculptor would rave over Only, before the sculptor could rave over them he would have to belong to the school of Epstein

" I'll try, *hijo mio*," replied the Dominie. " Presumably you have some pleasantry in mind, which makes me suspect you to be not the dullard to-day that you pretended you were yesterday For as the Duke, or maybe it was the Duchess, remarked on a certain occasion to Don Quixote pleasantry and good humour dwell not in dull noddles Here I go "

After serious reflection, however, I have decided that to proceed any further with the relation of this adventure and its astonishing and wholly unforeseen sequel, would be to ask for trouble For I have learned my lesson I haven't forgotten, nor am I likely to forget, the public outcry which yon little

Gorilla-*versus*-Navy incident on the New Galloway road raised in the Glasgow Press Nor have I ceased to remember that I was then not only accused of having drawn on my imagination, but accused also of having made the whole thing up So, to avoid further outcry and similar accusations, I shall leave this Dominie affair untold, and continue, pausing only to remind the sceptical among you that the simple truths of veracity are oftentimes more strange and surprising than the complicated lies of fiction

Along we went, after the adventure, sadder and wiser men But the Dominie had to have his say Said he repeatedly

"Did I not tell you so? Did I not solemnly and dissuasively warn you, *amigo*, that they who seek adventures do not always meet with good ones? *Hijo de demonio!* Did I or did I not? Answer me!"

"Oh, shut up!" I cried at last, goaded almost to madness "Shut up, you blethering old windbag, and leave me alone Another word on the subject and the fried banana's off!"

Said the Dominie, under his breath "*Caramba! y Cáspita!*"

Said I, above my breath "*Cascara! y Sarsaparilla!*"

Through time we came to where a footpath leads down to Ravenshall Caves, amongst which is reputed to be the cave of Dirk Hatteraick, the villainous smuggler in *Guy Mannering* But a notice-board on which the word *trespass* loomed large scunnered me, so that instead of descending and exploring the caves I pushed onward in high dudgeon, saying things about landlordism and about spoliation of the countryside by countrysiders that made the Dominie close *Gil Blas* on his thumb and express astonishment and delight at the unusual richness of my vocabulary



"But be not wroth, *hijo mo*," he went on to say "For it is we, and not they, who own the land we, the meek, who, says the beatitude, inherit the earth The fact that we tramps can enter a plantation and camp overnight without payment of tax, ground rent, or death duty, proves that we are the authentic owners. Owning nothing we own all, we are first in the queue for Kingdom Come—always supposing there is a Kingdom Come, if there isn't, well, we meek and virtuous ones who have abstained from riches with the idea of thereby earning a cushy time in eternity, have been sadly done Besides, *amigo*, the Best People are, and invariably have been, tramps Buddah, Mohammed, and Christ were tramps, likewise Homer and the wiser poets after him And how pitifully little and small-souled your great Sir Walter was, is shown by his greed for great possessions *Hijo de demonio*! So great was his greed that it bankrupted him, turned his brain, and killed him, after he had prostituted his divinely bestowed genius to its furtherance And he knew better "

The road meanwhile had been gradually curving inland away from Wigtown Bay, and we were now walking up the western shore of Fleet Bay towards Gatehouse-of-Fleet

This part of the coast being of a more indented nature than the other caused the road to wind, and in consequence afforded us fine vistas between trees of sandy shores and levels of blue water In my opinion it is the best part of the whole road And, since evening had come, as soon as a suitably secluded bit of shore showed up we called it a day and encamped for the night

The Dominie remained reasonably taciturn until he had had his fill of the fried banana I had promised him, whereupon he waxed unreasonably loquacious

"*Hijo mio*," he began, "I would have you to know that all I told you before anent tramps and landlords, was but tarts and cheesecakes to what I am now going to relate—as the one-handed chronicler of the history of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza allowed himself on a certain occasion to remark

"As I before intimated, we tramps, being above all men meek, inherit the earth, and landlords are our caretakers. They keep in repair, although not always in such perfect repair as we would wish, our wayside woods and roadside shrubberies. And in the main, being mostly blue-blooded (which is equal to saying venous-blooded, or bad-blooded, for blue blood, as physicians tell us, is foul, impure, dirty blood, and therefore bad blood) they, our caretakers, caretake with the servile docility due to, and demanded by, our own red blood. But on occasion, *amigo*——"

"On occasion," I broke in, "they eat fried banana for supper, and the banana oil lubricates their talking apparatus. Ha! ha! ha!"

"You disparage me by that supposition, *hijo mio*! Abstain from interruption and give ear to my disclosures of illegal crimes and felonious malpractices. As I wished to remark——"

"And your language was plain, that for ways that are dark, and for tricks that are vain, the bad-blooded laird is peculiar, which the same you would rise to explain, eh?"

"Exactly, *hijo mio*. Just as vulgar mobs on occasion rise and depose their own kings and emperors, so these our caretakers on occasion rise and betray us to the Law. And then we are up against things. *Y por que?* Because Law, all Law, being the invention of property owners for the safeguarding of property, acts mercilessly and spitefully and maliciously towards us, who, owning

all, own nothing For in the eyes of the Law poverty is a crime and poor men are criminals "

"Criminals ?" I cried "What the devil are you hawering about ! Now that you're serious you're not funny Justice, everybody knows, is the same for poor and rich alike "

"Justice, yes But—*Hijo de demonio* !—who's talking about Justice ? I'm talking about the Law, which is Justice's antonym, *amigo* What would happen, pray, if, supposing you were a millionaire and I were a pauper, a policeman should happen upon the scene at this moment ? "

"The two of us," I replied, "millionaire and pauper, would be arrested and taken to the nick "

"Not so, *hijo mio*, not so True, both of us would be arrested and taken up, but only one of us would spend the night in the cells I, the pauper, would be that one You, the millionaire, with your money, would have bribed the Law to release you For such is the Law "

"You mean that the blokes in the nick would accept a bribe ! "

"Certainly Only, of course, they don't call it a bribe Trust the Law to legalise its illegalities They call it bail But what is bail if it isn't a bribe, a legalised bribe, slipped into the palm of the Law ? "

"This is terrible," said I to that

"Truth is always terrible, *amigo* Both of us, millionaire and poor man, are arrested on an identical charge But only I am punished, while you with your money buy the Law right and left, and get off unpunished , for to a man with money the loss of a few shillings or pounds spent on bail or fine is not punishment Or if we admit that it is punishment, there is nothing degrading about it But I, the poor man, simply because I am a poor man, am visited with the full punishment of the Law And *my*

punishment is degrading I am deprived of my liberty, I am searched, and stripped of the little I do possess, I am flung into the cells, and on my appearing before the magistrate (who is a property owner, and therefore biassed and prejudiced against all who are not property owners), I, still being the poor man unable to bribe the Law with a fine, am sentenced and flung into prison guilty of poverty, convicted of being found poor!"

"This is monstrous—if true," said I, aghast

"If true? *Hijo de demonio!* Did not Anatole France himself say——"

"Enough!" said I, closing my ears and rolling up in my blanket "First Le Sage, then Bernard Shaw, and now Anatole France By your cold-blooded anti-social views I read you for a red-hot Socialist Good-night—*hijo de demonio!*"

Although that was the last I was to see of the Domine, it was by no means the last I was to hear For in the night he shook me awake several times in order to pour into my ear such remarks as "Behold the serenity of the night, *amigo*, and the solitude we are in, inviting us, as it were, to intermingle watching with our sleep," and "Blessings on him who invented sleep, the mantle that covers all human thoughts, the food that appeases hunger, the drink that quenches thirst, the fire that warms cold, the cold that moderates heat, the coin that purchases all things, the balance and weight that equals the shepherd with the king, the simple with the wise," and, the last I remember, "To-morrow is a new day, *amigo Buenas noches Dios le bendiga!*"

## LAP THE EIGHTH

### THE ROAD TO DALBEATTIE

Exit the Dominie—Missing my pal—In Kirkcudbright—In the Institute—Looking for a graveyard—Billy Marshall—The long arm of heredity—Service and civility—Dundrennan Abbey—A half-wit—Two of a kind—Brilliant, highly educated, cultured—Put simply—On to Auchencarn—A Kailyard village—Kailyard characters—Into Dalbeattie

NEXT morning I awoke to find the Dominie gone

No sooner did I discover this than I dived into my pack to see what he had departed with. And I saw The magnet to trouble and the lodestone to misadventure had attracted unto itself my wallet of notes !

Then I miscalled myself for every kind of fool. For I recollected the Dominie asking me overnight what the wallet contained, and my telling him that it contained notes. And I cursed, and I swore. Then, a light suddenly breaking in upon me, I laughed aloud at the scurvy trick that Fate, aided and abetted by the Dominie's kleptomania, had played. For the joke was on him. He had taken my wallet of notes, all right, but—*Hijo de demonio* !—they were not, as he must have imagined, Treasury notes, but notes, topographical and archæological, relating to Galloway !

After a thoughtful breakfast I hit the road and shortly arrived in Gatehouse-of-Fleet

This is a pretty little town. It nestles in a wooded valley amid green hills, and the pleasant Water of Fleet flows across the foot of its street, for, like the

majority of Galloway towns, Gatehouse consists of but a single street. Nevertheless, it made a charming enough picture as it lay half-awake in the morning sunlight, the slow blue smoke-wreaths from its hearths ascending through the golden dewy air.

From thence the road into Kirkcudbright proved extremely dull and uninteresting. The fact is, I was missing my pal the Dominie. I longed to hear again his *hijo mio*, his *amigo*, his *Hijo de demonio*! I would have given many fried bananas, and umpteen wallets of notes, topographical and archæological, relating to Galloway, for the privilege of listening to him once more quoting from his Bible. For the old rascal had not been unlikeable. He had got underneath my skin. His company had been meat and drink to me, and now that he was gone I was experiencing acute hunger and thirst.

Along I trudged between walled-in estates and inaccessible policies, muttering to myself

“ The stately homes of Scotland,  
How beautiful they stand  
Amid their tall ancestral trees—  
Cluttering all the land ! ”

At last, after eight miles of this misery, the wind wafted to me the tangy smell of sea-water, and soon I was crossing the Dee on the raw concrete monstrosity that bridges that lovely stream, and in glittering sunshine I entered the town of Kirkcudbright.

Kircoobrie (for this, incredible as it may sound to Englishmen and other foreigners, is how Kirkcudbright is pronounced) was holding high carnival. I mean it was in the throes of a mad, whirling gala time to which, with true Gallovidian abandon, the inhabitants to a man had yielded themselves up.

body and soul, recklessly and riotously bent on quaffing to the dregs the cup of dissipation. I mean it was a *whole* holiday, and, in consequence, the town was utterly, absolutely, and most funereally dead, hardly a soul was in the streets, and every shop was closed and shuttered for dear life.

Approaching the only human being within sight, a man with a nose between his eyes, I pointed to a tall, gloomy, tumbledown building that had attracted my notice, and asked him why the Kirkcudbright authorities had allowed a brewery to be built on so central a site.

"Man," says he, "yon's no' a brewery. Yon's oor Castle."

Though I said that every shop in Kirkcudbright was closed, this wasn't so. In my wanderings round I chanced upon a little shop with a TEAS sign, and it was open. So as hunger was upon me I entered and asked the woman if I could have something to eat.

"Na, na," says she, lifting the counter flap and coming through to show me out, "ye'll get naething to eat here, ma cullen. Ye'll get oot, that's what ye'll dae. And ye'll no' come back or I'll lowse the gudeman on ye. He'll sort ye, that I tell ye. Huh! Something to eat. The very idea!"

Somewhat dazed by so warm a welcome I continued my wanderings through the deserted village. A big hotel next caught my hungry eye. Recklessly I entered. I rang bells, knocked at doors, went into rooms, opened cupboards and drawers, coughed, called, shouted, banged on a gong, but all to no purpose. The place was as lifeless as the palace of the Sleeping Beauty.

More dazed than ever I sought the street and again continued my wanderings. This time, though, I struck lucky. I bumped into a restaurant which

I had passed at least a dozen times, but which, the blinds being down, I had supposed closed. It wasn't, however. So there, for an hour or more, I remained dining, resting, smoking, and drinking the water out of the flower vases.

Afterwards heavy rain drove me into the reading-room of the Institute. But if the streets were dull this was ten times duller. The walls were discoloured in dark brown and dull red. Beside myself there was a thin straight-backed spinster lady whom my presence seemed to irritate. Each time I turned a page she darted at me from over her pince-nez a withering look of scorn. My every movement caused her intense nervous annoyance, and she tut-tutted at such a rate that my nerves were soon on edge, too. Whereupon, to relieve the tension, I rose, and going over to a bookcase fitted with sliding panels, I made to open it to get at the books. But the panel would only budge an inch at a time, creaking and jamming, so that the sweat of hysteria soon beaded my brow. Then, unexpectedly, when I was exerting my utmost strength, the treacherous panel gave and shot home with a report that lifted the spinster lady two feet into the air and sent me scurrying through the door in inglorious retreat, gibbering and wholly unstrung.

The rain had ceased, so, after pulling myself together, I enquired of a wee boy the whereabouts of St Cuthbert's Church.

"I think that's it ower there, mister," he said, pointing to the church opposite the Institute.

"But whaur's the graveyard?" I asked. "I thought there was a graveyard attached to it?"

"Aye, well, that's the graveyard, mister." He indicated a railed-in green beside the kirk.

"But whaur are the graves and the tombstones? I don't see ony."



"Oh, maybe they just wore awa', mister," the imp answered, and went off, and for the next quarter of an hour I wandered about Kirkcudbright like a half-wit, telling folk I was looking for a graveyard and asking if they had seen one

"That I hae, man," a bloke at last assured me "I ken just what you're efter It's St Cuthbert's Cemetery, is it no'?"

"Sure. Whaur the auld tombstones are"

"Aye, whaur the auld tombstones are Go along this street to the fit and haud on to your richt up the brae, and ye'll no' be lang o' coming to it The auld tombstones are in the laigh part"

Sure enough, when I reached the cemetery I found the old tombstones in the laigh part. Some of them, relics of the skull-and-crossbones era, are hoary beyond deciphering, the rest would be the better for the attentions of an Old Mortality And there, where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap, I wandered around searching for a certain headstone

Nor did I search in vain. Almost before I was aware I found myself standing beside the upended slab of rough stone that marks the last resting place of Billy Marshall, Caird of Barullion, and king of the tinker-gypsies of Galloway

The stone has been whited and the chiselled lettering picked out in black While on one side is carved a scutcheon blazoned with two cutty spoons crossed beneath a pair of tups' horns, indicative of Billy's trade of horner, on the other side is this inscription

The Remains of  
WILLIAM MARSHALL  
Tinker, who died  
28th Novr, 1792,  
at the advanced age of  
120 Years

He was a proper man, was this Billy Born in the parish of Kirkmichael in 1672, he died at Kirkcudbright in 1792, so he must then have been as old as the inscription says A man of many parts, Billy had been seven times in the Army, and had deserted as often, besides running away from Naval service He had been seventeen times lawfully married He was tinker, smuggler, highwayman, murderer, etc., as the fit took him It has been said of him that he had the good and bad qualities of man about him in a very large degree He was kind, yet a murderer, an honest soul, yet a thief, at times a generous savage, at other times a wild pagan, he knew both civilised and uncivilised life, the dark and fair side of human nature, had no fear, was seldom sick, could sleep on a moor as soundly as on a feather bed, took whiskey in excess, yet lived to a patriarchal old age

He was the Rob Roy of Galloway, and books could be filled with his exploits, real and legendary One of his wives, Flora Marshall, is said to have been the prototype of Scott's Meg Merrilies, and one of his cronies, Andra Gemmil, is likewise said to have been the original of Edie Ochiltree, the bedesman of *The Antiquary*, while Billy himself is mentioned in the notes to *Guy Mannering* As above intimated, he was the recognised head of the tinker-gypsies of Galloway, having been crowned king with full pomp and ceremony

As I stood by the graveside my thoughts wandered back through the years to the little stone hut on the wild coast of Merioneth in Wales, where, you may remember, a mysterious old man in an ulster had told me about the Marshall Mark

"The Marshall Mark," he had said, "is the cross on the loof o' a' lineal descendants o' Billy Marshall, ae-time king o' the tinker-gypsies o' Galloway, and

last o' the Picts o' that airt . And whaever has  
that cross on his loof is a true Pict and a  
Marshall."

Then, shuttle-like, from the distant past my thoughts returned to the near past, and I recollected the three weird gypsy sisters on Torrs Warren how the cross on my loof, *the trushul*, had excited them, and how they had cried, "You're ane o' the Marshalls!"

And as I stood pondering on how far-reaching is the long arm of heredity, a thought suddenly broke in upon me, making me exclaim

"By heaven, the prophecy! It's come true!"

"Ye'll meet wi' a big black man, soon," the spaewife had said And she had said right I had indeed soon met with a big black man, or big man in black the Domine!

Excited by this discovery, and feeling like the Child of Destiny itself, I made my way back down into Kirkcudbright For, thought I, if by black man the spaewife meant a man in black, then by blue man she must have meant a man in blue a policeman! And since she prophesied that I should meet not only with one policeman but with a lot of policemen, then the sooner I took myself off the streets the better for the Kirkcudbright constabulary!

Spurred by this noble purpose, then, and it being nearly night, I approached a little hotel and rang at the front door, which was shut And after prolonged waiting a towsy-headed bloke in his shirt sleeves, with his braces dangling behind, appeared and asked what the devil I wanted

"I want put up for the night," I told him

"Oh, ye do, do ye?" he replied, vainly groping for his braces "Weel, I suppose I'll hae to let ye in. But the folks and lassies are awa' for the day, ye maun ken, so if you're thinking there's meat in

the hoose ye're faur mistaken Ye'll hae to eat elsewhaur That's the best I'm willin' to do for ye at siccan short notice Tak' it or leave it, it's a' ane to me It's no' for ithers' pleasure, mind, that we keep this hotel, faur frae it Come your ways in "

Well, there I passed the night, and next morning immediately following breakfast I made haste to escape from Kirkcudbright, putting my best foot foremost for Dalbeattie, some eight leagues distant

The weather was fine, but the countryside hereabouts struck me as being not very striking From above Manxman's Lake one certainly gets a fine view of St Mary's Isle and Kirkcudbright Bay, but thereafter, as the road leaves the coast and strikes inland towards Dundrennan, tameness predominates and exasperates

Dundrennan Abbey would look better if it stood on a hilltop, instead of lying in a valley as it does For runs should be climbed up to and not descended upon Besides, to my way of thinking, ecclesiastical buildings are out of place amid trees and green fields So close a juxtaposition of the artificial and the natural is bad art and worse taste Man's temple built in the midst of God's temple borders on the sacrilegious, it is the sellers of doves and money-changers over again Towns and cities are the proper places for religious piles, backgrounds of brick and stone the only fitting backgrounds

As I passed the old Abbey I thought what a sad day that was for Scotland when, after her weary flight from the defeat of the royal forces at Langside, Mary, Queen of—— But heaven endow me with self-control! That was a near thing! My-oh-my! I was actually on the point of dishing up to you the same old stuff—cauld kail het—that writers of Scottish travel-books continue to dish up year after year! I was actually about to insult your intelli-

gence, and nauseate you to the boking point, by inviting you to picture this, imagine that, and conjure up the next thing! My-oh-my! Dear-oh-dear! Frae lang-windit pseudo-historians and tragic young queens that put up for the nicht, gude Lord deliver us!

About a mile beyond Dundrennan, in a deep green dingle where a burn runs to join the Abbey Burn lower down, I stopped and lighted a fire and had dinner. And I was aware, all during the meal, of somebody watching me from somewhere - now from over the rim of the dingle, again from among the rushes by the burnside, and another time from behind a nearby bole. And low daft chuckles accompanied the watching.

Then when I had lit my pipe and was reclining by the fire, I suddenly saw out of the tail of my eye a figure dart from behind the bole and with a triumphant yell snatch up my waterproof coat and run off with it. Whereat I leapt to my feet. But the figure, that of a young boy, gained the bank of the burn and stood holding out the coat at arm's length over the water, ready to drop it in should I make the slightest move.

I froze in my tracks and took stock of the boy, and at the first glance I knew him for what he was. The fixed lines of puzzlement wrinkling the brow, the permanent pucker around one eye, the cunning looks, the misshapen mouth that dribbled continually, and the low daft chuckles, all told a plain tale. I had to deal with a half-wit.

Pointing a finger at him I laughed aloud, as though enjoying the joke, and he joined in. Then, feigning sudden concern, I solemnised my features and anxiously called out:

"Don't drap it! Don't drap it! Ye'll droon them a', man!"

The boy instantly grew serious

"Them ? " he asks "What's them ? "

"The wee white rabbits," I replied "They're in the seams "

"Wee white rabbits in the seams ! "

"An' they're doin' sums "

"Doin' sums ? "

"Aye, engaged in abstruse mathematical calculation "

"Sirs ! Then it wadna dae to droon them, wad it ? "

"That's what I was thinking They're pedigree rabbits Droonin' might spoil them So bring them back here and we'll see what effect burnin' has on them "

The ruse worked The half-wit brought me back the coat, and after my shaking off the mythical rabbits into the fire and requesting him to observe that the result was positively negative, I bribed him with a cup of tea and a ham sandwich to sit down and chat a while

"Are ye fond o' puddocks ? " he asked, dipping the sandwich into his tea before cramming it whole into his mouth "Because I've got a couple o' them in ma pooches somewhere, gin ye wad like to tak' a puddock hame "

"I'm afraid no'," I replied "I like puddocks as little as I do Hallelujahs and polismen "

"That's what I'm gaun to be," said he, bolting the entire mouthful unchewed "A polisman When I grow up, ye ken "

"Aweel," says I, "if ye're spared to jine the polismen you'll find yoursel' among your ain kind It's boys like you becoming polismen when they grow up that has made the Force what it is to-day "

Among other things the half-wit asked what was happening in the Great Big World Outside

"Why," I answered, "this world that we're in

the noo · the world o' the open air an' the skies an' the seas an' the woods—this is the Great Big World Outside, the only world that matters An' everything's fine in it What you mean is, what's happening in the Little Small World Inside—inside the towns and cities, ye ken—the world that doesna matter a docken "

" Aye, weel, what's happening in't ? "

" Weel, that world is a brilliant, highly educated, cultured world , and what's happening in't is this. Ae third o' the brilliant, highly educated, cultured folk inhabiting it are busy denouncing war, and building great expensive war memorials to the thousands and millions o' deluded men who let their lives be ta'en frae them in what's ca'ed the Great War , though a truer name wad be the Little War, because it showed how little men are and how little their lives are worth "

" An' the ither twa-thirds o' thae brilliant, highly educated, cultured folk—what are they daem' ? "

" Weel, the second third o' the brilliant, highly educated, cultured folk are busy inventing worse poison gases, an' faster forts on wheels, an' bigger an' mair destructive bombing aeroplanes , and drilling, and inoculating wi' the team spirit—withoot which wars wouldnae be possible—the sons an' grandsons o' thae deluded millions for whom war memorials are still being built, so that at the finish o' the next war a further lot o' war memorials, bigger and better war memorials, will be wantit "

" An' the last third o' thae brilliant, highly educated, cultured folk—what are they busy at ? "

" Weel, the last third o' the brilliant, highly educated, cultured folk are no' sae brilliant, highly educated, cultured folk as the ither brilliant, highly educated, cultured folk , but they're busy for a' that They're busy talking at Historic Talks, an'

parleying at Historic Parleys, an' conferring at Historic Conferences, an' gesturing wi' Historic Gestures in order that the brilliant, highly educated, cultured folk who denounce war and build great expensive war memorials, will nae langer hae any excuse for denouncing war and for building great expensive war memorials, an' also that the ither brilliant, highly educated, cultured folk who want mair war and bigger an' better war memorials, will hae a' the mair reason for wanting mair war and bigger an' better war memorials That's it put simply "

"But what about the folk who're no' brilliant, highly educated, cultured folk," asked the half-wit "Do *they* no' coont ? "

"No," said I, "they're in the vast majority, so they don't coont They're honest and hardworking, and so are beneath contempt A' that they did was to supply the millions o' dead bodies ower whom war memorials could be built, an' built, mind ye, wi' money that they had likewise to supply And a' that they do is to pay the expenses o' the brilliant, highly educated, cultured folk, who, being in the vast minority, coont, and who, being dishonest and softworking are to be worshipped—to pay an' pay and keep on paying And the mair they pay, and are compelled to pay, the better they like it Aye, and when they, who don't coont, hae let themsells be bled white, the brilliant, highly educated, cultured folk will write abune their grave '*Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*' "

"An' what does that mean ? "

" '*Fools and their money (and their lives) are soon parted*' "

"Weel," says the half-wit, laughing his half-witted laugh, and dribbling from his half-witted mouth, and leering half-wittedly from his half-witted



eyes, "I've heard tell o' half-wits in ma time, but sirs' sic a b'ilin' o' half-wits as you've just been tellin' me o'—I've ne'er heard tell o'!"

Then he took himself off

Climbing from out the dingle a little later I was soon striding along the breezy track that runs high above Solway on its way to Auchencarn, which is halfroads to Dalbeattie

The little there was of scenery was mildly wild, consisting of rolling moorland rising in the immediate north to compose the two heathy prominences known as Bengarn and Screel Hill. And often the English coast came into view across the intervening firth, Skiddaw looming plain, while Criffell's hump bulked always in the east, so that I strode onward contentedly enough

Auchencarn took a little time in showing up. It is a long sloping street, and it possesses every one of those features which writers of the Kailyard School assure us Scottish villages should possess. In fact, were you to make a composite picture of all the village communities which you have read about in Scottish family journals, not forgetting those idealised by Barrie, Crockett, Ian MacLaren, and others, that picture would be a picture of Auchencarn

This being so, it was infinitely gruesome walking down the long street, running the gauntlet of Kailyardism, as it were. For Auchencarn has everything. You look between two gable-ends and see a far vista of heathy moor and wooded hill, then look another way and see a ploughman and his team, with gulls hovering. For, of course, the sea is near. Auchencarn Bay with Hestan Island lies almost at the foot of the village street. Then, needless to say, there's the schoolhouse, the post-office, the smiddy, large as life and precisely as you

have always imagined them, with the burn and the brigg where the elders congregate at night. Then in the vicinity, unnecessary to remark, there's the old sawpit, the old stonebreaker, the old manse, the old lodge, 'n' everything.

The very atmosphere, as I passed through, made the tear well into my eye and brought the lump to my throat. I felt my bosom contracting and my heart breaking. A sad-faced young girl peeped at me from behind a curtain, and I knew her instinctively. She was the wild lass who had returned on a winter's midnight after long absence,

“ Nae ring upon hei haun',  
Nae kiss upon her mou'—  
Quaet noo ”

And as postie passed trundling his bicycle, he said exactly what I expected he would say. “ Aye, aye ” For about the likes of him I knew. His mother had just died of consumption, his wife of cancer, and his wee lass was doon wi' diphtheria. He himself had an incurable internal complaint.

And the old spinster who peeped out from another window with hope springing in her breast, she was true-heart Susie, who after long years of waiting for her Tam was still waiting for her Tam. Her Tam who had died of double pneumonia in the poorhouse long-syne and would never return more, she herself had hip-joint disease and complications, and was wearin' awa'. And the blacksmith, dour man, he and the minister hadn't exchanged a word for five years come Lammas, ah, but in the shadow of the Dread Angel they were shortly to be brought together and become as brothers, for the blacksmith's wee laddie was at that moment rapidly sickening for the scabby scrofula.

And the old cobbler in his shop yonder, about the likes of him I knew, too The village called him miser, but this wasn't so, for every penny he saved he sent regularly to Edinburgh where it was used to help poor students through college and university And when the cobbler's time came—he had asthma, bronchitis, floating liver, enlarged heart, and he systematically starved himself—all the poor students who had profited by his help (among them two ex-prime ministers, five celebrated surgeons, thirteen illustrious university professors of Oriental languages, and a gross of universally renowned divines) would come to stand by his grave and do homage to this son of Auchencarn, who, while he lived, had been so cruelly misjudged, and everybody would cry and weep and shed tears and pray, and so the cobbler would pass from this vale of tribulation, in the odour of extra-strong peppermints and moth-eaten Sunday blacks

On the road between Auchencarn and Dalbeattie I encountered nothing of interest Rain started shortly after my leaving the former village and continued intermittently all the way

Miserable though the weather was, however, it in no wise blinded me to the rugged and picturesque scenery which makes the valley of the Urr Water, and the environs of Dalbeattie, a tourists' stamping ground In particular the rocky wooded heights, especially those around Craig Nair, delighted me I felt I was back in the Highlands again And although the near neighbourhood of certain granite works detracted somewhat from the general wildness, yet their encroachment was easily forgiven For there an old, old friend of mine, an associate of my days and nights among the dead, first saw the light There, where pine and fir clothe the wild

ciags and mountain torrents dash down, grew the granite that is now the Thames Embankment

At the bridge over the Urr, a mile west of Dalbeattie, dusk met me and together we entered the town

I found it a thriving little place, pleasantly busy a miniature Aberdeen, with shining grey granite greeting the eye at every turn and imparting to the senses a similar chill. Down one side of its little main street I strolled, then back up the other, and as by that time darkness had set in and the rain increased, there was nothing for it but to put up for the night at an hotel, and as the smaller hotels all refused me admittance on various prettexts, I had no choice but to put up at the biggest

## LAP THE LAST

### THE GREAT TRAMP-ROYAL FIRE- LIGHTING TO-DO<sup>1</sup>

Along Solway shore—A man in a motor—An idea—"Let's see your bob"—The big blue man—One of life's ironies—Tit for tat—Under arrest—In the police station—The Domine's contention—In the cells—My fellow-prisoner—*Hijo de demonio*!—No wash—A form of flattery—Pondering—More advice—A fledgeling lawyer—In court—A black mark—A terrible document—Not the judge—Respect for the Law

I ISSUED from the hotel next morning to find the rain a thing of the past and a genial sun shining from a cloudless sky. So, quitting Dalbeattie, I strode southward past singing woods and along the skirts of low moorland hills for about eight or more miles until, at Lochend, the road bent sharply round the end of a loch and continued eastward, running neck and neck with the Solway shore.

With the great sun-bright expanse of the firth on my right and the hump of Criffell looming in front, I pushed rapidly on, the road rising and falling like a scenic railway. Over in England the Cumberland mountains stood up clear and distinct. Ever and again a tremendous gust of wind came blasting down from the high moors, to be immediately followed by

<sup>1</sup> Following the report in the Glasgow Press of this shocking and unprecedented affair, and subsequent to the controversy that raged in its wake, there was issued to every man of the City police, it will be remembered, a new pair of snitchers. But Tramp-Royal tells me that although he did for a moment toy with the idea of descending upon Glasgow and attempting by force to get himself arrested, yet he hadn't the heart to carry out so heartless a project.—M M

as tremendous a burst of rain, and this, with intervals of sunny calm, was to continue well on into the day. And the phenomenal thing about it was that during the wet spells the heavens remained as blue and cloudless as ever, the rain appearing to fall out of a clear sky.

Up and down, above the yellow Solway, the road carried me until at last Kirkbean lay in the rear and I was faring northward straight for Dumfries, on the last lap of my journey.

Hereabouts a fairly extensive plantation runs uphill from the edge of the road, and into this I was driven by one of those above-mentioned rainbursts. And as I sat resting with my back against a tree congratulating myself on having accomplished the tour of Galloway successfully, there passed on the road a motor-car in which sat a man whose gaze, I saw, was fixed on something to the left of me and deeper within the wood. And in that gaze I read resentment and indignation and a desire to chastise. And when the car had gone on I looked behind me and saw, what I hadn't seen before, that a long curling column of smoke was winding through the undergrowth from a fire not far from where I sat.

"'Tis some vagabond," I muttered, "camping on the forest floor, only this and nothing more."

Up I got, thereupon, and going over to the fire found seated beside it an old tramp blowing on a can of newly drummed-up tea.

"Hello, chum," said he.

"Hello, chum," said I. "I say——?"

"Yes?"

"If I were you I'd get out of here as quick as I could. A bloke passed in a car just now, and he saw your fire, and by the unkind look in his eye I'll bet he means mischief. I know landowners when I see them, and yon was one. And if he doesn't show

up pretty soon with a gamekeeper or a gun or something, I'll eat my hat. He'll give you gypp for lighting a fire in his wood, chum "

" Well, and what about it ? " was the answer to that " I'm not afraid of any man "

" Yes, but this bloke isn't a man He's a gentleman "

" What difference does that make ? "

" All the difference in the world " And thereon I explained how when a man finds a tramp trespassing on his land he throws him off himself, but that when it is a gentleman who does the finding he has to go and fetch a man to do the manly thing for him.

And it was while explaining this that the idea came to me I recollected the conversation I had had with my pal the Dommie, on the night before his disappearance, about what would happen if a pauper and a man with money were arrested on the same charge Well, here was a chance to see what really would happen If I could get this tramp to join forces with me and resist the gamekeeper, whom I was convinced the bloke in the car had sneaked off to fetch, it wouldn't be long before the two of us, pauper and man with money (I had a couple of quid or so), were in the hands of the police.

But on my outlining this plan to the tramp he refused point-blank, using bad words and worse phrases, to have anything to do with such a suicidal project. Sociological experiments were not in his line

" But I got myself arrested once before," I urged, " and it was spiffing, chum I spent a whole week in jail It was like a holiday, and I hadn't a penny to pay I had a room all to myself, and was given clothes, and books to read, and the warders brought me my meals regularly three times a day—dandy

meals, too!—and did everything to make my stay pleasant. They even wore felt slippers during the night so that they wouldn't disturb me. Ah! nice, considerate men they were, those warders. I often think about them. Come on, chum, be a sport!"

The tramp, however, had by this time got the wind up, and jumping to his feet made to stamp out the fire. But I stopped him.

"If you leave the fire as it is," I said, "and let me empty your tea into my billy, and then make yourself scarce, I'll give you a bob, chum."

"Let's see your bob."

I showed him it, and he took it hesitatingly, and I lost no time emptying his tea into my billy, whereupon, with a last puzzled look into my face, as though he questioned my sanity, he made his way out through the wood and hurried off along the road.

Thus, you are to picture me sitting there waiting on what I didn't exactly know. The tramp had flung on a fresh supply of fuel previous to my appearance, so that the fire was now smoking away voluminously. For, as a result of the constantly recurring showers I told you about, the wood was damp and didn't catch readily. As I sipped the tea, too, I noted admiringly how the tramp had built his fire so that the wind, which blew steadily from the one direction, carried the smoke and sparks down a clear vista out on to an open field.

A long time I lay there before the fire, and nothing happened, it was only when I was thinking of getting up and going away that I caught sight of a policeman on a bicycle coming along the road. But him I didn't connect in the least with the bloke in the car, even when he dismounted and climbed into the wood and came prowling cautiously towards me. I thought it was just a policeman come to engage in a little Saturday afternoon's poaching. So I lay doggo



and let the man in blue nose me out, which he soon did.

"Hello," said I, by way of greeting

But the bobbie was in no mood for an exchange of incivilities. He had his unpleasant duty to do.

"Man," says he, "don't you know that you're not allowed to light a fire here? Look at all that withered stuff lying about. One spark and the whole wood would be in a blaze. What made you come in here of all places?"

"I just wanted to boil my can, that was all," I replied, indicating the tramp's tea in my billy.

"Well, that's a pity. But the proprietor of this wood saw the smoke of your fire when he was passing in his car a while ago, and he came and told me. Spoiled my whole afternoon it has. So get your things together and come along."

Rising reluctantly, I collected my gear, and helped the policeman to stamp out the fire. Then out came the inevitable notebook, and he asked my name and address.

Now, it has always been my custom, when asked this question by policemen, to give a wrong name and address. It simplifies matters as regards oneself and complicates matters as regards the police. But this time I decided otherwise. For in my pocket was a typewritten letter bearing on the envelope my proper name and address in full, and in my pack was some printed matter relating to my recently published book, *The Travels of Tramp-Royal*. Honesty, therefore, would not only be good policy, but better publicity.

"My name's Matt Marshall," I said, accordingly.

"Matt?" echoed the policeman. "You mean Matthew. I'll put down Matthew." And under my very eyes, coolly and legally, he wrote in his notebook a name different from that I had given him.

I stood aghast

"And now your address," said he

But I was taking no more chances Producing from my pocket the letter whereon my address was typed as plain as typewriter can type (I have the identical letter in front of me at this moment), I told the policeman to copy my address off that Which he did And picture my amazement when, on looking over his shoulder, I saw that the address he had copied into his notebook was an address different from that on the letter !

This fairly took the cake This, surely was one of life's little ironies For on each occasion in the past that I had given a policeman a wrong name and address, he had invariably got them right, but now, lo and behold ! on this, the very first occasion that I had given a policeman my right name and address, he had got them wrong !

And I—I, whose opinion of policemen has before now raised a public outcry—even *I* had always given policemen credit for at least being able to read and write correctly

Oh, but come, Tramp-Royal, says you don't you think you're being a trifle severe ? Policemen are only human like yourself, they make mistakes, too, at times Yes, I reply but isn't that just the point ? Why should we overlook John Law's mistakes ? Does John Law overlook ours ? He does not He's a heathen He doesn't believe in forgiving us our trespasses, so why should we forgive him his ? Tit for tat is fair play, says he, in his bloodthirsty, un-Christian way an eye for an eye, a life for a life So let's hoist him with his own petard Let us take down everything he says and does, and use it as evidence against him For what's sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander, and fair play's a jewel

Well, on reaching the road my escort retrieved his

bicycle, and together we walked along in the direction of New Abbey, which lay about a league or more away. And as we walked I became aware that the policeman was repeating to me a legal formula, which he asked if I understood. Whereupon I said yes. For it suddenly dawned on me that he was formally charging me with having lighted a fire on private land without the consent or permission of the owner or legal occupier, and that I was now under arrest and on my way to the cells.

This came as a surprise. So casual and undramatic had the arrest been made, that it took me hard to accept it as a fact. Honestly, I had thought that when the policeman had told me to get my things together and come along, he was merely, so to speak, going to see me off the premises!

However, I comforted myself with the reflection that the fact of my being under arrest was a legal guarantee of my innocence. For, nonsensical as it may sound to lay minds, those whom the Law arrests are held to be innocent until lawyers succeed in proving them guilty. Such, it seems, is the Law, ladies and gentlemen and honest men and women who work for their living—such, it seems, is the Law. Though, it being the Law, ten to one there's a catch somewhere. So the next time any of you are arrested as a suspect you'll know that you haven't been arrested on suspicion of being guilty—good heavens, no!—you've only been arrested on suspicion of being innocent.

But to my tale. The policeman and I continued walking along in the direction of New Abbey, exchanging remarks about the weather, etc., and only occasionally discussing the reason for the policeman and I walking along in the direction of New Abbey. And at one place we passed a tramp. But though we looked at him he didn't look at us, but kept staring

straight ahead as though unaware of our being on the road. And were this a fictitious history, I should dramatically inform you that this was the self-same tramp who had lighted the fire for which I was under arrest for lighting. But alas! to tell you so would be to tell a lie. He was simply a tramp treating John Law with a tramp's customary contempt.

Then a 'bus full of people came along and the policeman stopped it, and we both got in, everybody looking at us and nudging each other. It made me feel like a murderer, or worse. And soon we were in New Abbey. But this, I learned, wasn't our destination, we were going straight through to Dumfries. My companion, however, left me for a few minutes to dispose of his bicycle, and during his absence another bloke kept his eye on me.

You see, I was being treated by the Law exactly as though I were some low criminal who had been convicted of some low crime, I who had still to be tried and found guilty, and who, therefore, in the eyes of the Law, was still innocent. Why, the policeman himself confessed that, in the circumstances, many a policeman would have handcuffed me!

Through the glorious sunshiny afternoon, thereafter, we rolled on to Dumfries, where we alighted from the 'bus and made our way to a police station.

Here my escort delivered me into the hands of the station sergeant with full particulars, including my wrong name and address. Then, telling me to empty my pockets, they examined the contents thereof. Then, after much questioning and jocular palaver, I was told that the penalty of the offence I had committed was a fine of not more than twenty shillings, or a period of not more than fourteen days in prison. But in the meantime, until my case came up, they said, since I had money, I could, and of course would, bail myself out.

Now, here was the opportunity to prove, or disprove, my pal the Dominic's contention that with money I could buy the Law right and left, and that there is one Law for the rich and poor, that is, one Law for the rich, and another, a less fair and less lenient one, for the poor

It was explained to me that if I paid down a certain sum of money—a pound, if I remember rightly, or it may have been two pounds—I could walk out of the police station a free man, and all that would be required of me would be my appearance at court later on to hand over the few shillings of fine, when the money I had paid down would be returned to me. And it was further explained that absolutely nothing whatsoever in the way of punishment would be meted out to me. In short, while the mere show of one sum of money sufficed to exempt me from preliminary incarceration in the cells, the payment of another sum would exempt me from the later penalty of imprisonment in jail.

Well, that proved one part of the Dominic's contention. I could buy the Law right and left. For, being in possession of a couple of quid or so, I was, comparatively speaking, a rich man—a man with money. But supposing I were instead a poor man—a man without money—what then would happen? Well, that also would I investigate. Nothing was easier. By simply refusing to buy the Law right and left, by keeping fast hold on my money, I would be putting myself on a level with a poor man—a man without money. This I proceeded to do.

"I refuse to bail myself out," I told the station sergeant and his accomplice. "I prefer to be locked up."

This acted like a bombshell. In utter bewilderment they looked at me, then at each other. Obviously they couldn't credit their ears. So I repeated

what I had said But even then they wouldn't, and couldn't, believe They both buttonholed me and explained, painstakingly, minutely, and kindly, what they had already explained They thought I hadn't understood But I had And I told them so Though before they would even listen to me I had almost to go down on my bended knees before them, pleading for imprisonment So, dazed and dumb-founded, they were at last compelled to grant me the boon I craved

"You're a game one, Matha," was what the sergeant said, but "You're off your nut, Matha," was what he thought

They then searched me and confiscated everything I had, except my *Tiader Horn* and the clothes I stood up in, noting down a description of each item as they rifled Then to my allotted cell I walked unaided with a firm tread (as reporters say of murderers on their way to the scaffold), and the door was locked and bolted behind me

On finding myself alone I repeated aloud

"You cannot banish us, proud world,  
We banish you!"

and went and wrote on the lintel of the door these words of Chateaubriand "*La police, par sa nature, est antipathique à toute liberté*" After which I had a jolly good laugh and settled down to enjoy yon chapter in *Tiader Horn* in which Cecil Rhodes gets dead drunk on prickly pear brandy

The cell was the usual police cell, large and roomy, with walls of white glazed brick, a strong iron-sheeted door with an eye-big spyhole in it, a barred and ventilated window high up in the wall facing the door, and a slightly sloping wooden platform, or dais, on the floor beneath the window The only

unusual thing about it was that the usual sanitary convenience was insanitary

When I had been reading some time the door was unlocked and the turnkey came in with an armful of blankets and my supper, consisting of a generous pint of excellent tea and two large sandwiches, one cheese, the other marmalade, which I hastened to dispose of with an appetite impaired somewhat by the propinquity of the insanitary convenience above-mentioned. That done, I unrolled the blankets on the wooden platform, which was raised a few inches above the concrete floor, and lay waiting for darkness and sleep, smoking the cigarette which the—— However, I promised him I wouldn't tell, so I won't, it's a crime for policemen to be humane

Just as twilight was falling I heard voices and the sound of struggling outside in the passage, and the cell next to mine was opened and a violently resisting body was forcibly thrown in, and a voice said: "Man, you ought to know better than drink *meth*," and the door banged, and the prisoner flung himself against it in a paroxysm of rage and despair, battering on it with his fists and screaming at the top of his lungs "Let me out! Let me out! Let me out!" Then he suddenly quietened and threw himself on the floor, where all through the night and well on into the morning he lay snoring and grunting in swine-like sleep

Poor devil! Locked up for being drunk and disorderly, I supposed, or, more truly, for being too poor to afford a dining-room table. For had he been a rich man with a dining-room table, and a house to keep it in, he could have drunk himself under it umpteen times and the Law would never have dreamt of touching him

Verily, the Law was Justice's antonym, as had been told me by my pal the Dominic

And when at last I fell asleep it was to dream that that old rascal was standing over me in triumph, saying “*Hijo mio*, answer me! Did I not tell you so? Did I not tell you that in the eyes of the Law poverty is a crime and poor men are criminals? I did, *amigo*, I did. And do you lie there languishing in durance vile, imprisoned for poverty? You don’t, *amigo*, you don’t. ’Tis but a dream, a false creation proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain, engendered through looking too long upon the banana when it is fried. Ha! ha! ha! As the immortal *pícaro*, Gil Blas de Santillane, remarked on the occasion of his incarceration at Astorga—a prisoner without money is like a bird with its wings clipped. *Vaya! amigo, vaya! Ha! ha! ha! Hijo de demonio!*”

At midnight I woke to find a bloke flashing an electric torch in upon me through the hinged opening in the door of my cell, and asking if I was all right. I said yes, but that I could be doing with more blankets under me, so he fetched some and stayed and talked about life and literature. For he was that phenomenal thing—a policeman who read books and thought. And he invited me up to his house for a further chat as soon as I was released. But he had just finished praising *Christ on the Indian Road*, and I was just starting to denounce Anti-christ on the Galloway road, when his duties called him away, and I finished the cigarette and turned in to dream that the dreams of Lihenthal were come true, and that I, a man, was flying through the air with the ease of a bird.

Morning broke beautifully—outside. At eight o’clock the turnkey called in through the hole in the door “Rise and shine! Rise and shine!” (which made me imagine I was back in Hackney Wick limbo again), and I rose and rolled up my blankets



and was soon served with breakfast, if you can call a pint of tea and two marmalade sandwiches breakfast

I asked if I could have a wash, but this very natural request was refused, the turnkey explaining, whether as a joke or in earnest I can't for the life of me say, that I couldn't have a wash because I had been arrested in Kirkcudbrightshue and the water belonged to Dumfries! Anyway, no wash was forthcoming. I asked the sergeant, too, later on, but he put me off, as did another policeman in the course of the day. Yet the water tap was just across the passage from my cell door!

By this time the bloke next door was stirring, and we conversed by shouting into the grating covering the steam pipes which passed through both our cells. He had a head on him, he complained, like Barrow Head, and a mouth like the mouth of a sewer, otherwise he was still unconscious.

When not conversing with him, or reading *Trader Horn*, I paced up and down and round and round the cell. For you do a lot of pacing when you are in prison—pacing and thinking, aye, a lot of pacing, and a lot, a whole lot, of thinking. Or sometimes I whistled. And the acoustic properties of police cells are such that a whistler, no matter how poor or thin his notes, sounds as though he were a professional siffleur with a lifetime's practice behind him. Yes, a rich, honey-dripping fruitiness, voluminous and deafeningly penetrative, is imparted to notes whistled in police cells.

The morning wore away and soon it was dinner-time, when we were served with our Sunday dinner—a pint of tea and two marmalade sandwiches. Then afterwards the station sergeant, accompanied by someone who kept out of sight, paid me a visit, and we had a long talk together, laughing and joking

like bosom cronies I, of course, acted the simpleton, for a prisoner who acteth the simpleton maketh his jailers feel intelligent by comparison, which putteth them off their guard and rendereth them soft and workable, and looseneth their tongue. It is a form of flattery to which policemen (who, in common with all who spend their lives inside of uniforms, are inordinately vain) fall ready victims.

The station sergeant, like the perfect host, enquired anxiously if I found my cell as uncomfortable as I had expected, whereupon I, like the perfect guest, politely lied and told him yes, and that I was having as uncomfortable a time as anyone could wish. Which gratified him, for jailers like to think that their cells are producing on the inmates the effect that cells were intended to produce on the inmates. So I lied. And the sergeant, among other things, told me that the local reporters had got wind of my arrest and wanted to know if they could help me in any way, also, that an agent, or solicitor, was touting for my patronage, and, best of all, that the old chap in whose wood I had trespassed, was wild.

"He's wild, Matha," says the sergeant. "He's wild at you for lighting a fire in his wood. Flaming wild!"

And he laughed. And I laughed. And the bloke who was keeping out of sight—he laughed, too.

"So if I were you, Matha," advised the sergeant, "I'd plead ignorance. Tell the magistrate you didn't know you were doing any harm, and that you're sorry you caused any trouble, and he'll admonish you and let you go, or maybe at the most fine you in a small sum. For magistrates, you can understand, have got to keep right with these landed gentry."

Shortly after this the sergeant and his mysterious friend departed, and the third and last meal of the

day was served up. It consisted of the usual pint of tea and the usual couple of marmalade sandwiches, at which monotonous fare my stomach was beginning to revolt. However I got it over somehow and then lay down in the gathering twilight to ponder on what the sergeant had told me—particularly on how, if I pleaded ignorance, the magistrate would probably admonish me and let me go.

But I didn't wish the magistrate merely to admonish me and let me go. Such an ending would have been not only farcical, but humbling to the Tramp-regal dignity. For imagine it appearing in the newspapers that the great Tramp-Royal was told not to light fires any more in strange gentlemen's woods, and that he promised that he wouldn't. Tramp-Royal, who had lighted scores, hundreds, if not thousands, of fires in scores, hundreds, if not thousands, of strange gentlemen's woods, and intended to keep on doing so as long as he had strength enough in his fingers to strike a match!

The thing to do, in that case, was to throw gunpowder, so to speak, on the fire, aggravate my offence so that the magistrate would have to do more than merely admonish me. And I must think out a way between then and morning, when I was to appear before the magistrate. The best thing to do, therefore, was to sleep on the idea and let it ripen.

In time I fell asleep, but at midnight I woke to find a bloke flashing an electric torch upon me through the opening in the door and asking if I was all right. I said yes, for it was the phenomenal policeman who read books and thought, and who had invited me up to his house for a chat about life and literature. Directly I was released. So I got up, and we had another long interesting talk.

And this bloke's advice was the same as the ser-

geant's for me to plead ignorance, and I'd get off with an admonishment

Although the day of my trial broke early, yet it didn't break too early for me. With the first light I rose and sat down to the task of fashioning a legal weapon (or maybe I mean lethal weapon) with which the magistrate could bludgeon out of me the maximum fine that the Law demanded as the penalty for the offence which I hadn't committed. For I had decided to go the whole hog, and be hanged for a sheep rather than for a lamb.

This lethal weapon was a written statement, but before I had progressed very far with it I found I was writing it in broad Scots. So I tore it up and began again, using the foreign language, English. For although it would have been read aloud by a Scots lawyer, practising Scots Law, in a Scots Law-court, before a Scots magistrate, in Scotland, in the year of the centenary of Scott, the Scot of Scots, yet in its original Scots form the statement would have been unintelligible to the learned colleagues, and therefore, on that account, might have got me committed for contempt of court. So I rewrote it in English, with the single exception of the word *laird*, about which you shall hear more later.

After breakfasting on tea and marmalade sandwiches I was ordered to wash my face. Then the sergeant and I went on foot to court.

Here, while I waited in a side-room, a brisk young fledgeling of the Law entered and presented his card, from which I learned that he was an agent, or solicitor—the same who had been touting for my patronage on Saturday night. And he was still on the tout. But I told him that I didn't require his services as I intended making my own statement.

Immediately after this the sergeant led the way

into the court-room, which, with the exception of officials and reporters and two old jossers in the public seats, was empty and bare as Mother Hubbard's cupboard. And when the magistrate appeared, I, the poor dog, took my stand at the bar, and the trial began.

It was a gentleman in a black gown, if I remember rightly, or it may have been the magistrate himself, for I paid little attention to the preliminaries, who read out that I was charged with having on Saturday, in a plantation near New Abbey, lighted a fire without the consent or permission of the owner or legal occupier. And it was I, if my memory doesn't altogether fail me, who innocently pleaded guilty to this charge.

But I do remember that it was the gentleman in the black gown who stated the case against me. He said that the fire was noticed by the proprietor, who informed the police, that the accused (meaning myself) might easily have fallen asleep, and that there might have been considerable danger to the plantation, that the Forestry Commission had gone to the expense of supplying notices about lighting fires in plantations, that the accused was taken into custody and offered bail, but that although he had money he refused, preferring to stay in the cells until that morning.

You see, all was blah-blah and irrelevancy. Although I had pleaded guilty to lighting the fire, yet it hadn't been proved that it was I who did light the fire. As you are aware, I was innocent of having lighted the fire. It was mere foolishness, also, to insist that I *might* easily have fallen asleep, when facts proved that I was remarkably wide awake, or that there *might* have been considerable danger, when there was no danger. And if the gentleman in the black gown had troubled to read one of those

Forestry Commission notices he would have seen, greatly to his embarrassment, that there was no mention therein of the lighting of fires being prohibited, and I could have shown that I (meaning, of course, the real culprit, the tramp), when lighting the fire, sedulously followed out the instructions contained in these same notices

To cap all, the gentleman in the black gown accused me of being an educated man !

It is scarcely credible, I know, but I assure you he did I heard him, the reporters heard him, and they wrote it down, for I watched them

"He's an educated man," he complained to the magistrate And I saw that that was a black mark against me For he said it as one would say, "He's a blackmailer," or "He's a dope pedlar" Although how he knew I was an educated man beats me He had never met me ! I suppose, however, someone had told him I had written a book, but being able to write a book is no proof that a man is educated, or even intelligent Members of Parliament write books

When this gentleman in the black gown stopped talking the magistrate asked me why I had lighted the fire, and I told him simply that it was in order to make some tea Yet such is the atmosphere of court-rooms that this simple answer of mine sounded like the confession to some unutterably vile cannibalistic rite, and everybody looked at each other as much as to say "Ah, so that's it, eh ? Now we're hearing something *Making tea* The cad ! The—the—the beast !"

The magistrate next asked me if I had anything to say, whereupon I produced my written statement

Now, all this time I had been aware of a second gentleman in a black gown hovering near And as I made to hand him the statement to pass to the

other gownsman I discovered he was the same fledgeling of the Law, the agent or solicitor, who had previously tried to get me to employ him. So, as he still looked very much unemployed, I told him to read the statement himself

As he prepared to do so I smiled grimly to myself. For it was a terrible document I had put into his hands—a document guaranteed to make any self-respecting magistrate see as much red as a bull would see if waved about in front of a red blanket. And as the agent cast his eye over it I saw him blanch and wilt. It was as though he were a fireman ordered to put out a fire with a hose spouting petrol instead of water. In a word, the statement was the antithesis of all that a legal document should be. Firstly, it was written in pencil, on a dirty fly-leaf torn from *Trader Horn*. Secondly, it was short, and properly punctuated. Thirdly, it contained sound common-sense. Lastly, it was couched in language so simple that a child could understand it.

"Sir," read the agent, "*All I can say is that although I plead guilty to lighting a fire I do not plead guilty to endangering property. That the property was in no danger is proved by the—the laird's——*"

"The what?" asked the magistrate.

"The laird's," answered the reader.

"The laird's? The——? Go on."

(Says I to myself "Good-bye, admonishment.")

"——*That the property was in no danger is proved by the laird's action in calmly driving on to a village miles away to tell the policeman—and then disappearing. If his property had been in any danger he would have immediately stopped his car and made all haste to put out the fire—and then fetched the policeman——*"

(Says I to myself "Five shillings fine.")

*“——Besides, the dead wood I used, as also the other wood littering the planting, was damp. Showers had been falling at intervals all day, and the wind carried the sparks out of the planting——”*

(Says I to myself “Ten shillings fine”)

*“——I am sorry if I have caused any trouble and am willing to pay for the few pieces of decayed wood I used to light my fire”*

(Says I to myself “Fifteen shillings fine”)

Says the magistrate to me “You’re not the judge. A fine of fifteen shillings is imposed”

By refusing to pay the fine, of course, I could have got fourteen days in prison. The magistrate, I feel sure, wouldn’t have objected. And look at the copy it would have meant enough to fill half a dozen books! But as I had brought my sociological experiment, as well as my Gallovidian gallivanting, to a satisfactory conclusion, and as I had planned to catch the Mid-day Scot at Carlisle that same day, I decided that the prison idea, alluring though it might be, had best be shelved for the present. So I, the rich man, bribed the Law with fifteen shillings, and it conveniently forgot the fourteen days behind prison bars, which, had I been the poor man, would assuredly have been my punishment.

But that fifteen bob wasn’t all I had to pay. For outside the court-room, when I was bidding good-bye to the agent who had read my statement, I happened to ask, as a sort of joke, if I owed him anything. And imagine my flabbergastment when that downy young fledgeling of the Law came back at me with—

“Oh, no, nothing to speak of. Just the trifling fee of ten shillings and sixpence”

Like my former slight brushes with the Law,



this latter one taught me many things But chief and paramount among the many things it taught me was respect for the Law respect so real as to make me dedicate this work to it, respect so profound as to compel me, each time I write Justice's antonym, to spell the monosyllable with a capital, and sing, while so doing, the opening bars of the National Anthem, but yet respect that is no respect respect akin to that forced from one by the blood-encrusted bludgeon in the gripe of a blood-maddened maniac, respect extended towards a loathsome, slimy reptile which, though you grind beneath your heel its brainless, envenomed head, will treacherously uncoil and slay you with its tail !

THE END

## SIR BEDIVERE

King Arthur and the queens are sped,  
Yon sable barge as bier for them ,  
Am I the last ? Are *all* men dead ?  
The wailing on the mere for them !  
Then, Jesu Merci, turn the page  
A chapel and an hermitage !

As o'er a gulf of years I see  
Yon grisly field of yesternight ,  
In this new dawn it seems to be  
The japing of some jester-knight  
Then, Jesu Merci, turn the page  
A chapel and an hermitage !

Loud upon Camelot beats the blast,  
Turret and tower and gable round ,  
Where halls are void, and weatherbrast  
The sieges of the Table Round  
Then, Jesu Merci, turn the page  
A chapel and an hermitage !

No more the smite of mailed fists,  
No tilting at the yaid for me ,  
No levelled lances in the lists,  
No jousts at Joyous Garde for me  
Then, Jesu Merci, turn the page  
A chapel and an hermitage !

Those hearts are gone I loved the best,  
(Hurt hearts in time must mend, Elaine !)  
My twin companions of the Quest—  
Sir Bors and bold Sir Bendelaine  
Then, Jesu Merci, turn the page  
A chapel and an hermitage !

What profit now my blood-bright sword,  
 And all its cruel cost to me,  
 If that the Sangreal of the Lord  
 With hope of Heaven is lost to me ?  
 Then, Jesu Merci, turn the page  
 A chapel and an hermitage !

Is this the end ? Is this the goal  
 Where foughten fields have guided us ?  
 Then, sooner to redeem the soul,  
 We might in peace have bided us !  
*Then*, Jesus Merci, turn the page  
 A chapel and an hermitage !

## WORDS AND PHRASES

*ae*, one  
*ae-time*, one-time  
*aff*, off  
*airt*, direction, locality  
*Alto!* Halt!  
*Amigo mio*, My friend  
*ane pane*, a pain  
*a' readies* already  
*ashel*, dish  
*ava'*, at all  
  
*bachles*, old boots  
*bawbee*, a copper  
*beak*, magistrate  
*ben*, through  
*bien*, well-to-do  
*black-and-white*, tea and sugar  
*blatter*, heavy shower  
*blethering*, foolishly talkative  
*boking*, retching  
*bonza*, good  
*bowster*, bolster  
*brae*, slope of a hill  
*breeks*, trousers  
*brownie*, household fairy A  
   folk-memory of the vanished  
   Pict (?)  
*Brummies*, Brummagem, or  
   Birmingham, men  
*Buenas noches*, Good-night  
*Bull!* Rot! Sound and fury  
   signifying nothing, contrac-  
   tion of vulgar term  
*bulls*, policemen  
*bum*, beg  
*bumped off*, got rid off, mur-  
   dered  
*burn*, brook  
*buttie*, companion  
  
*cadged*, begged  
*cadie*, hat

*Cand*, tinker, wandering beg-  
   gar  
*cakey*, daft  
*can-ceiled*, having a crooked,  
   bent, or partly sloping ceil-  
   ing, as in an attic  
*camphor - and - moth*, rhyming  
   slang for broth  
*canned-up*, drunk  
*Caramba!* *y Cásputa!* expres-  
   sive of impatience and sur-  
   prise  
*cauld kail het*, cold soup heated  
*cauldrie*, susceptible to cold  
*chanting lay*, *the*, the street-  
   singing business  
*chatty*, verminous From *chat*,  
   a louse  
*china*, pal  
*chinning the cost*, whittling  
*clarty*, dirty  
*cleg*, gadfly  
*clobber*, clothes  
*cobbler*, shoemender  
*come clean*, make a clean breast  
*couping*, overturning  
*crummy*, verminous  
*cullen*, or callant, a lad  
*cundie*, farthing  
*cushy-jobbed*, having a soft job  
*cully spoons*, short horn spoons  
  
*dae*, do  
*daisies*, or daisy-roots, rhyming  
   slang for boots  
*dees*, detectives  
*dekh*, *dekko*, look  
*Dim Saesneg*, No English I  
   do not talk English  
*Dios le bendiga!* God bless you!  
*dishwife*, hawker of crockery  
*docken*, dock

*dog's body*, bully beef  
*doglally*, daft  
*double-crossing*, playing false  
*douce*, sober, prudent  
*dough*, money  
*douse the glim*, put out the light  
*drum*, tramp's tea-can  
*drum-up*, boil one's can, make a meal  
*Dukker drey my vast*, Tell my fortune by my hand  
*dune*, done  
*dyffryns*, valleys

*ear-walloping*, sleeping  
*e'e*, eye

*fankle*, got into a, became knotted, entangled  
*fit*, foot  
*floored cheeny*, flowered china  
*flopping place*, sleeping place  
*forbye*, besides  
*forment*, opposite  
*French scrub*, a lazy man's scrub a mop up  
*Frisk him*, Search him  
*fusionless*, pithless, spiritless

*gaberlunzie*, beggar, tramp  
*gaffer*, under-foreman  
*gait*, way, road, direction  
*gaun*, going  
*George Robey*, the, rhyming slang for the Toby  
*Gi'e ye a buttie*, Accompany you  
*gin*, if  
*glyns*, glens  
*gorgio camp*, town, city  
*Gracias*, Thanks  
*griddles*, sings in the street for money  
*grubber*, workhouse  
*grye*, pony  
*gub*, mouth  
*gudewife*, married woman

*half-inched*, rhyming slang for *pinched* stolen

*Hasta la vista!* So-long!  
*Hast du das Schloss*, etc —

"Hast thou seen that lordly castle,  
 That Castle by the Sea?  
 Golden and red above it,  
 The clouds float gorgeously"  
 —Longfellow's trans

*Haud on!* Hold on!  
*hauf-set*, half-set  
*haverin'*, talking nonsense  
*hidalgo*, gentleman of noble family  
*hijacker*, thief's robber  
*Hijo de demonio!* Son of the devil!  
*Hijo mio*, My son  
*hirpled*, limped  
*hooch racket*, booze business  
*hoodlum*, hooligan  
*horner*, worker in horn  
*houndjacapivy*, thingmybob  
*howff*, haunt, den

*jake-a-loo*, all right, fine  
*japing*, practical joking  
*java*, coffee  
*Joyous Garde*, estate given to Sir Lancelot of the Lake for defending the Queen's honour against Sir Mador  
*jugal*, dog  
*jungles*, a hoboes' camp Used always in the plural, like shambles, gallows, etc

*keir vardo*, caravan  
*kill-me-dead*, rhyming slang for bread  
*kup*, bed Used also for doss-house  
*Koshli sarla!* Good-evening!

*laigh part*, low part  
*lang-windat*, long-winded  
*La police*, etc, Policemen are the bunk  
*leerin'*, lying  
*llans*, enclosures, yards, churches, villages  
*llyns*, lakes, ponds, pools.  
*loof*, palm of the hand

*Lowse the gudeman, I'll, I'll*  
let loose my husband

*Madre de Dios!* equivalent to  
Gracious heavens!

*mark*, halfpenny

*main drag*, main road

*makar*, maker or poet

*mango-mengro*, beggar

*meat*, food

*Meeri deary Douvel!* Good  
God!

*meth*, methylated spirit

*monica*, name

*mort*, woman, mistress

*mousey*, cheese

*mulligan*, stew

*mumpers*, beggars

*nants*, dingles, ravines, gorges

*nek*, police station

*noo, the*, just now

*Okay, Oke, O K*, all right

*on-ding*, fall of snow or rain

*one-and-a-bender*, one and six-  
pence

*on the spot*, marked down for  
immediate killing

*over*, over

*oater*, armpit

*packman*, pedlar

*panhandling*, begging

*Paracrow tute!* Thank you!

*peglegging*, rhyming slang for  
begging

*pemmican*, food

*pen*, sister

*peter*, tramp's pack

*philabeg*, short kilt

*Phoney hand*, *Dealt you a*,  
Bluffed you

*piearo*, *picaroon* rogue, cheat

*pier-head junks*, jobs on ships

obtained at the last moment

owing to member of the crew

failing to appear

*pinched*, arrested

*Pobrecito loco!* Poor little  
daft one!

*Por Dios!* For God's sake!

*posada*, inn

*pounding my ear*, sleeping

*puddocks*, frogs

*puggled*, daft

*quhulk*, which

*radjy*, delightful

*rins na by*, doesn't run past

*rod*, revolver

*Rokkra Romanes?* Can't you,

Can't you speak Romany?

*root*, bread

*Rub out jumor*, Kill my son

*ruffer*, bush-bed

*ruffmans*, bushes

*Sábele, amigo*, etc, Remember,  
friend, that bleeding and  
drinking warm water are  
the two grand principles,  
the true secret of curing all  
the distempers incident to  
humanity Yes, this mar-  
vellous secret that—

*Sar shin, meeri rawmie?* How  
are you, madam?

*seunner*, disgust

*Shelta*, tinker jargon

*shuunanegan*, fooling

*steean*, such

*sieges*, seats, chairs

*skilly-go-lee*, gruel

*skimes*, glances

*skypper*, covered shelter

*sleekit-eyed*, sly-eyed

*Slip us the low-down*, Tell us  
the secret

*smiddy*, smithy

*smurr*, fine rain

*snaffled*, stole, stolen

*snitchers*, handcuffs

*snobber*, shoemender

*soople*, supple

*sorner*, sponger

*Sort ye, He'll*, He'll give you  
what for

*spacd*, told

*spacwife*, fortune-teller

# TRAMP-ROYAL ON THE TOBY

*spike*, casual ward of work-house  
*Spill it*, Tell it  
*Spill the medicine*, Get it off your chest Disgorge  
*splits*, plain-clothes men  
*squealed*, played the informer  
*Suckers!* Fools!  
*swallowing the anchor*, retiring from the seafaring life  
*sweated it outa him*, got it out of him by force  
*swell break*, a, a great chance, a fortunate happening  
*swiping*, stealing  
*swithering*, hesitating doubtfully  
*syboes*, young onions  
  
*taeless*, toeless  
*taen*, took  
*talk turkey*, to, to get down to business, come to the point, have a heart-to-heart talk  
*tan*, tent  
*Tancy Lee*, rhyming slang for tea  
*tap*, beg  
*tatchey Romanes*, genuine gypsies  
*thae*, these  
*tike*, flock, or wool, bedding  
*Tobbar*, road  
*Toby*, on the, on the road the state of being on the road, or down and out Never used in the literal sense  
*toe-rags*, clouts that many tramps use in place of socks  
*tommy*, food  
*toom*, empty  
*towans*, sand dunes  
*traiking*, trudging

*tramp-major*, porter's assistant  
*tucker*, food  
*tummy-timber*, food  
*two-and-a-bender*, two and six-pence  
  
*unco*, uncouth, strange  
*Un millón de gracias!* A million thanks!  
  
*Vamos!* Let's go!  
*Vaya!* Indeed!  
  
*washed up*, all, finished, no good any more  
*wauchie*, sallow, caloused  
*weatherbrast*, weather-warped  
*Weisst du nicht*, etc, Don't you know that every man must wear out one pair of fool's shoes (play the fool), if he wear out no more?  
*What a grasni shan tu!* What a woman you are!  
*whaup*s, curlews  
*ween*, a, a number  
*wings*, pennies  
*Wohl hab' ich es gesehen*, etc —  
 " Well have I seen that castle,  
 That Castle by the Sea,  
 And the moon above it standing  
 And the mist rise solemnly "  
 — Longfellow's trans  
  
*yag*, fire  
*yegg*, burglar generally, safe-blower particularly  
*Yellow Belthes*, natives of the East Anglian and Lincolnshire fenlands  
*yellow yite*, yellow-hammer  
*you-and-me*, rhyming slang for tea  
*Y por que?* And why?

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